This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

WIDENER LIBRARY
HX GEV4 T

12462.16.10

From the Income of
the Bequest of
WALTER W.
NAUMBURG '89

Harvard College Library

Charles Philips

ESSAYS

ON

Shakespeare's

DRAMATIC CHARACTERS:

WITH

AN ILLUSTRATION

OF

SHAKESPEARE'S REPRESENTATION

OF

NATIONAL CHARACTERS,

IN THAT OF

FLUELLEN.

THE SIXTH EDITION.

BY

WILLIAM RICHARDSON, M.A. F.R.S.E.

PROFESSOR OF HUMANITY,

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW.

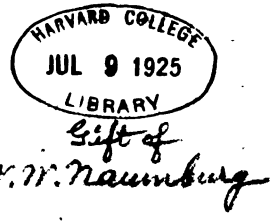
London:

PRINTED FOR SAMUEL BAGSTER,

IN THE STRAND.

1812.

12462.16.10



Printed by Harris and Brothers, Liverpool.

38-111
41

INSCRIBED,

IN TESTIMONY OF

THE GRATITUDE AND ESTEEM

OF THE AUTHOR,

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

OF GARTMORE,

LATELY LORD RECTOR

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW,

AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

FOR THE COUNTY

OF STIRLING.

Advertisement

TO THE

FIFTH EDITION, PUBLISHED IN 1797.

IN the year 1774 was published, "A philosophical Analysis and Illustration of some of Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters." In the year 1784 were published, "Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters of Richard the Third, King Lear, and Timon of Athens: to which were added, An Essay on the Faults of Shakespeare; and Additional Observations on the Character of Hamlet." Soon after

were published, "Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff; and on his Imitation of Female Characters:"—to which were added, some General "Observations on the chief Objects of Criticism in the Works of Shakespeare."

These different performances are now collected into one volume, with one uniform title. They are more commodiously arranged; and have received such correction and improvement, as must necessarily have occurred to the author, and been suggested by his friends, in the course of several preceding Editions. He hopes therefore that, on these accounts, they are rendered still less unworthy of public notice.

ADDITIONAL ADVERTISEMENT

FOR THE

present Edition.

In addition to the above it will be observed, that this Edition contains an Essay never before published, on Shakespeare's Representation of National Characters, illustrated in that of Fluellen: together with two original Letters to the author, from Mr. Burke, consisting of Observations on Shakespeare, and other literary subjects.

Glasgow College, Jan. 13, 1812.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	1
ESSAY	I.—Character of Macbeth	35
——	II.—Character of Hamlet	69
——	III.—Additional Observations on the Character of Hamlet	121
——	IV.—The Character of Jaques	142
——	V.—The Character of Imogen	170
——	VI.—The Character of Richard the Third	197
——	VII.—The Character of Sir John Falstaff	240
——	VIII.—The Character of King Lear . . .	289
——	IX.—The Character of Timon of Áthens	313
——	X.—On Shakespeare's Imitation of FEMALE CHARACTERS	338
——	XI.—The Character of Fluellen . . .	364
——	XII.—On the FAULTS of Shakespeare .	401
——	XIII.—Conclusion, containing Observations on the chief Objects of Criticism in the Works of Shakespeare .	430
	APPENDIX	439

INTRODUCTION.

MORALISTS of all ages have recommended Poetry as an art no less instructive than amusing; tending at once to improve the heart, and entertain the fancy. The genuine and original Poet, peculiarly favoured by nature, and intimately acquainted with the constitution of the human mind, not by a long train of metaphysical deductions, but, as it were, by immediate intuition, displays the workings of every affection, detects the origin of every passion, traces its progress, and delineates its character. Thus, he teaches us to know ourselves, inspires us with magnanimous sentiments, animates our love of virtue, and confirms our hatred of vice. Moved by his striking pictures of the instability of human enjoyments, we moderate the vehemence of our desires, fortify our minds, and are enabled to sustain adversity.

Among the ancient Greeks, the study of the Poets constituted an essential part in their celebrated systems of education. Plutarch observes, in his treatise on this curious and interesting subject, that, as mandrakes planted among vines, imparting their virtue to the grape, correct its acidity, and improve its flavour; so the poetic art, adorning the precepts of philosophy, renders them easy and agreeable. Socrates, according to Xenophon, was assiduous in applying the works of Homer and Hesiod to the valuable purposes of moral instruction. Discoursing on the character of Thersites, he displayed the meanness of calumny, and the folly of presumption; he argued, that modesty was the companion of merit, and that effrontery was the proper object of ridicule and reproach. Discoursing on the story of Circe, he illustrated the fatal effects of intemperance; and rehearsing the fable of the Syrens, he warned his disciples against the allurements of false delight. This great teacher of virtue was so fully convinced of the advantages resulting from the connection of poetry with philosophy, that he assisted Eu-

ripides in composing his tragedies, and furnished him with many excellent sentiments and observations. The propriety of bestowing attention on the study of human nature, and of borrowing assistance from the poets, and especially from Shakespeare, will be more particularly illustrated in the following remarks.

The study of human nature has been often and variously recommended. "Know thyself," was a precept so highly esteemed by the venerable sages of antiquity, that they ascribed it to the Delphian oracle*. By reducing it to practice, we learn the dignity of human nature. Our emulation is excited by contemplating our divine original: and, by discovering the capacity and extent of our faculties, we become desirous of higher improvement. Nor would the practice of this apophthegm enable us merely to elevate and enlarge our desires, but also, to purify and refine them; to withstand the solicitations of groveling appetites, and subdue their violence: for improvement in virtue consists in duly regulating our inferior

* Cic. de legibus.

appetites, no less than in cultivating the principles of benevolence and magnanimity. Numerous, however, are the desires, and various are the passions that agitate the human heart. Every individual is actuated by feelings peculiar to himself, insensible even of their existence; of their precise force and tendency often ignorant. But to prevent the inroads of vice, and preserve our minds free from the tyranny of lawless passion, vigilance must be exerted where we are weakest and most exposed. We must therefore be attentive to the state and constitution of our own minds; we must discover to what habits we are most addicted, and of what propensities we ought chiefly to beware: we must deliberate with ourselves on what resources we can most assuredly depend, and what motives are best calculated to repel the invader. Now, the study of human nature, accustoming us to turn our attention inwards, and reflect on the various propensities and inclinations of the heart, facilitates self-examination, and renders it habitual.

Independent of utility, the study of the

human mind is recommended in a peculiar manner to the curious and inquisitive; and is capable of yielding delight by the novelty, beauty, and magnificence, of the object. Many find amusement in searching into the constitution of the material world; and, with unwearied diligence, pursue the progress of nature in the growth of a plant, or the formation of an insect. They spare neither labour nor expence, to fill their cabinets with every curious production: they travel from climate to climate: they submit with cheerfulness to fatigue, and inclement seasons; and think their industry sufficiently compensated, by the discovery of some unusual phænomenon. Not a pebble that lies on the shore, not a leaf that waves in the forest, but attracts their notice, and stimulates their inquiry. Events, or incidents, which the vulgar regard with terror or indifference, afford them supreme delight: they rejoice at the return of a comet, and celebrate the blooming of an aloe, more than the birth of an emperor. Nothing is left unexplored: air, ocean, the minutest objects of sense, as well as the greatest and

most remote, are accurately and attentively scrutinized. But, though these researches are laudable, and are suited to the dignity of the human mind, we ought to remember, that Mind itself deserves our attention. Endowed with the superior powers of feeling and understanding, capable of thought and reflection, active, conscious, susceptible of delight, and provident of futurity, it claims to itself a duration, when the most splendid objects around us shall be destroyed. Observe the vigilance of the senses in collecting images from every part of the creation: memory preserves them as the materials of thought, and the principles of knowledge: our reasoning faculty separates, combines, or compares them, in order to discover their relations and consequences: and imagination, sedulous to amuse, arranges them into various groups and assemblages. If we consider the passions and feelings of the heart; if we reflect on their diversity, and contemplate the various aspects they assume, the violence of some will terrify and astonish, the fantastic extravagance of many will excite amazement; and others, soft and com-

placent, will sooth us, and yield delight. Shall we assert, therefore, that the study of human nature is barren and unpleasant? Or that Mind, thus actuated and informed, is less worthy of our notice than the insect produced at noon-tide, to finish its existence with the setting-sun? "Shall a man," says Socrates, "be skilled in the geography of foreign countries, and continue ignorant of the soil and limits of his own? Shall he inquire into the qualities of external objects, and pay no attention to the mind?"

But, though the utility or pleasure resulting from the study of human nature is manifest, the progress men have hitherto made in it, neither corresponds with the dignity of the subject, nor with our advances in other regions of science. Neither is our knowledge of the passions and faculties of the mind proportioned to the numerous theories men have fabricated concerning them. On the contrary, the numerous theories of human nature that have appeared in various ages and languages, have been so different from one another, and withal so plausible and imposing, that, instead of in-

forming, they perplex. From the uncertainty and diversity of opinion, some have asserted that the mind of man, on account of its transcendent excellence, and the inconceivable delicacy of its structure, can never be the object of precise inquiry. Others, again, from very different premises, deduce the same conclusion, forming their opinions on the numerous, and apparently discordant, powers and affections of the mind, and affirming, that its operations are governed by no regular principles.

That a perfect knowledge of the nature and faculties of the mind is not to be acquired in our present condition, cannot possibly be denied. Neither can the contrary be affirmed of any subject of philosophical inquiry. Yet our internal feelings, our observation and experience, supply us with rich materials, sufficient to animate our love of knowledge; and, by enabling us to prosecute our researches, to extend the limits of human understanding. Neither can we affirm, that our thoughts, feelings, and affections, are in a state of anarchy and confusion. Nothing, you say, seems wilder and more

incoherent, than the thoughts and images continually fluctuating in the mind: like the "gay motes that people the sun-beams," they know no order, and are guided by no connection. We are conscious of no power that directs their motions, restrains their impetuosity, or regulates their disorder. No less irregular and discordant are the feelings and emotions of the heart. We are alike accessible to love or hatred, confidence or suspicion, exultation or despondency. These passions and dispositions are often blended together, or succeed each other, with a velocity which we can neither measure nor conceive. The soul that now melts with tenderness, is instantly frantic with rage. The countenance now adorned with complacency, and beauteous with the smile of content, is in a moment clouded with anxiety, or distorted with envy. He must therefore be more than mortal, who can reduce this tumultuous and disorderly chaos to regularity.—"Lift up thine eyes to the firmament," said a countryman to a philosopher, "number the stars, compute their distances, and explain their motions. Observe the

diversity of seasons, and the confusion occasioned by the changeableness of the weather: the sun and refreshing showers cherish the fruits of the earth; but our fields are often blighted with mildews, the sky is suddenly overcast, the storms descend, and the hopes of the year are blasted. Prescribe laws to the winds, and govern the rage of the tempests; then will I believe, that the course of nature is regular and determined." Thus, even external phænomena, to an uninstructed person, will seem as wild and incongruous as the motions and affections of the mind. On a more accurate inspection, he finds that harmony and design pervade the universe; that the motions of the stars are regular; and that laws are prescribed to the tempest. Nature extends her attention to the most insignificant productions: the principles of vegetation are established immutable in the texture of the meanest blossom; the laws of its existence are accurately defined; and the period of its duration invariably determined. If these observations are just, and if we still maintain that the mind is in a state of anarchy and disorder,

we are reduced to the necessity of affirming, that nature hath exhausted her powers in the formation of inferior objects, and neglected the most important; that she hath established laws and government in the inanimate creation, and abandoned the mind to misrule; and that she hath given us a body suited to our condition, fashioned according to the most accurate proportions, and adjusted to the nicest rules of mechanics; and left the animating principle, the mover and director of this wonderful machine, to be actuated by random impulses, mishapen, and imperfect. Shall we acquiesce in this opinion, and ascribe negligence or inability to the Creator? The laws that regulate the intellectual system are too fine for superficial attention, and elude the perception of the vulgar. But every accurate and sedate observer is sensible of their existence.

Difficulty in making just experiments is the principal reason why the knowledge of human nature has been retarded. The materials of this study are commonly gathered from reflection on our own feelings, or from observations on the conduct of others. Each

of these methods is exposed to difficulty, and consequently to error.

Natural philosophers possess great advantages over moralists and metaphysicians, in so far as the subjects of their inquiries belong to the senses, are external, material, and often permanent. Hence they can retain them in their presence till they have examined their motion, parts, or composition: they can have recourse to them for a renewal of their impressions when they grow languid or obscure, or when they feel their minds vigorous, and disposed to philosophize. But passions are excited independent of our volition, and arise or subside without our desire or concurrence. Compassion is never awakened but by the view of pain or of sorrow. Resentment is never kindled but by actual suffering, or by the view of injustice.

Will anger, jealousy, and revenge, attend the summons of the dispassionate sage, that he may examine their conduct, and dismiss them? Will pride and ambition obey the voice of the humble hermit, and assist him in explaining the principles of human nature? Or by what powerful spell can the abstracted

philosopher, whose passions are all chastened and subdued, whose heart never throbs with desire, prevail with the tender affections to appear at this unkindly command, and submit the delicacy of their features to the rigor of strict inquiry? The philosopher, accustomed to moderate his passions, rather than indulge them, is of all men least able to provoke their violence; and, in order to succeed in his researches, he must recall emotions felt by him at some former period; or he must seize their impression, and mark their operations at the very moment they are accidentally excited. Thus, with other obvious disadvantages, he will often lose the opportunity of a happy mood, unable to avail himself of those animating returns of vivacity and attention essential to genius, but independent of the will.

Observations made, while the mind is inflamed, are difficult in the execution, incomplete, and erroneous. Eager passions admit no partners, and endure no rivals in their authority. The moment reflection, or any foreign or opposing principle, begins to operate, they are either exceedingly ex-

asperated, agitating the mind, and leaving it no leisure for speculation; or, if they are unable to maintain their ascendent, they become cool and indistinct; their aspect grows dim; and observations made during their decline are imperfect. The passions are swift and evanescent: we cannot arrest their celerity, nor suspend them in the mind during pleasure. You are moved by strong affection: seize the opportunity, let none of its motions escape you, and observe every sentiment it excites. You cannot. While the passion prevails, you have no leisure for speculation; and be assured it has suffered abatement, if you have time to philosophize.

But you proceed by recollection. Still, however, your observations are limited, and your theory partial. To be acquainted with the nature of any passion, we must know by what combination of feelings it is excited; to what temperament it is allied; in what proportion it gathers force and swiftness; what propensities, and what associations of thought either retard or accelerate its impetuosity; and how it may be opposed, weakened, or suppressed. But, if these

circumstances escape the most vigilant and abstracted attention, when the mind is actually agitated, how can they be recollected when the passion is entirely quieted? Moreover, every passion is compounded of inferior and subordinate feelings, essential to its existence, in their own nature nicely and minutely varied, but whose different shades and gradations are difficult to be discerned. To these we must be acutely attentive; to mark how they are combined, blended, or opposed; how they are suddenly extinguished, in a moment renewed, and again extinguished. But these fleet volatile feelings, perceived only when the mind is affected, elude the most dexterous and active memory. Add to this, that an object suggested by memory is ever fainter and less distinct than an actual perception, especially if the object to be renewed is of a spiritual nature, a thought, sentiment, or internal sensation.

Even allowing the possibility of accurate observation, our theories will continue partial and inadequate*. We have only one

* Dr. Reid's Inquiry, chap. i. sect. 2.

view of the subject, and know not what aspects it may assume, or what powers it may possess in the constitution of another. No principle has been more variously treated, nor has given rise to a greater number of systems, than that by which we are denominated moral agents, and determine the merit or demerit of human actions. But this can scarcely proceed from any other cause than the diversity of our feelings, and the necessity we are under of measuring the dispositions of others by our own. Even this moral principle, though a competent judge of the virtue and propriety of human actions, is apt to mislead us in our inquiries concerning the structure and dispositions of the mind. Desirous of avoiding the rebuke of this severe and vigilant censor, we are ready to extenuate every blameable quality, and magnify what we approve.

In order, therefore, to rectify our opinions, and enlarge our conceptions of the human mind, we must study its operations in the conduct and deportment of others: we must mingle in society, and observe the manners and characters of mankind, ac-

cording as casual or unexpected incidents may furnish an opportunity. But the mind, not being an object of the external senses, the temper and inclinations of others can only be known to us by signs either natural or artificial, referring us to our own internal sensations. Thus, we are exposed nearly to the same difficulties as before. We cannot at pleasure call forth the objects of our researches, nor retain them till we have examined their nature. We can know no more of the internal feelings of another than he expresses by outward signs or language; and consequently he may feel many emotions which we are unable easily to conceive. Neither can we consider human characters and affections as altogether indifferent to us. They are not mere objects of curiosity; they excite love or hatred, approbation or dislike. But, when the mind is influenced by these affections, and by others that often attend them, the judgment is apt to be biassed, and the force of the principle we contemplate is increased or diminished accordingly. The inquirer must not only beware of external difficulties, but

must preserve his heart, both from angry, and from kind affection. The maxim, that all men who deliberate about doubtful matters, should divest themselves of hatred, friendship, anger, and compassion, is as applicable in philosophy as in politics.

Since experiments, made by reflecting on our own minds, or by attending to the conduct of others, are liable to difficulty, and consequently to error; we should embrace every assistance that may facilitate and improve them. Were it possible, during the continuance of a violent passion, to seize a faithful impression of its features, and an exact delineation of the images it creates in us, such a valuable copy would guide the philosopher in tracing the perplexed and intricate mazes of metaphysical inquiry. By frequently examining it, every partial consideration, and every feeling tending to mislead his opinions, would be corrected: his conception would be enlarged by discovering passions more or less vehement than his own, or by discovering tempers of a different colour. We judge of mankind by referring their actions to the passions and principles

that influence our own behaviour. We have no other guide, since the nature of the passions and faculties of the mind are not discernible by the senses. It may, however, be objected, that, according to this hypothesis, those who deduce the conduct of others from malignant passions, and those who are capable of imitating them, must themselves be malignant. The observation is inaccurate. Every man, unless his constitution be defective, inherits the principles of every passion: but no man is the prey of all the passions. Some of them are so feeble in themselves, or rather, so entirely suppressed by the ascendant of others, that they never become principles of action, nor constitute any part of the character. Hence it is the business of culture and education, by giving exercise to virtuous principles, and by rendering them habitual, to bear down their opponents, and so gradually to weaken and wear them out. If we measure the minds of others precisely by our own, as we have formed and fashioned them by habit and education, and make no account of feeble and decaying principles, our theories

must necessarily be inadequate. But, by considering the copy and portrait of minds different from our own, and by reflecting on these latent and unexerted principles, augmented and promoted by imagination, we may discover many new tints, and uncommon features. Now, that class of poetical writers that excel by imitating the passions, might contribute in this respect to rectify and enlarge the sentiments of the philosopher: and, if so, they would have the additional merit of conducting us to the temple of truth, by an easier and more agreeable path than that of mere metaphysics.

We often confound the writer who imitates the passions, with him who only describes them. Shakespeare imitates, Corneille describes. Poets of the second class, no less than those of the first, may invent the most elegant fictions, may paint the most beautiful imagery, may exhibit situations exceedingly interesting, and conduct their incidents with propriety: their versification may be harmonious, and, above all, their characters may be judiciously composed, partaking of no incongruous qualities, and free from the

discord of jarring principles. But the end of dramatic poetry not only requires that the characters be judiciously moulded and aptly circumstanced, but that every passion be naturally expressed. There is certainly a wide difference between the description of the sallies, the repulses, and impatience of a violent affection, whether they are described by the agent or the spectator, and their actual imitation and expression. But perfect imitation can never be effectuated, unless the poet in some measure become the person he represents, clothe himself with his character, assume his manners, and transfer himself into his situation. The texture of his mind must be exquisitely fine and delicate; susceptible of every feeling, and easily moved by every impression. Together with this delicacy of affection, he must possess a peculiar warmth and facility of imagination, by which he may retire from himself, become insensible of his actual condition, and, regardless of external circumstances, feel the very incidents he invents: like the votaries of a pagan religion, he must worship idols, the works of his own hands, and tremble

before the demons of his own creation. Nothing affords a stronger evidence of the active, versatile nature of the soul, and of the amazing rapidity of its motions, than these seemingly inconceivable and inconsistent exertions.

Shakespeare, inventing the characters of Hamlet, Macbeth, or Othello, actually felt the passions, and contending emotions ascribed to them. Compare a soliloquy of Hamlet, with one of the descriptions of Rodrigue in the Cid. Nothing can be more natural in the circumstances and with the temper of Hamlet, than the following reflections:—

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! O fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank, and gross in nature,
Possess it merely.—That it should come to this!
But two months dead! nay, not so much; not two:
So excellent a king, that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr: so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven

Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month—
Let me not think on't—Frailty, thy name is woman!
A little month; or ere those shoes were old,
With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears.—Why she, even she—
O heaven! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourn'd longer—married with my uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules. Within a month—
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married.—Oh, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.

In the Cid, Rodrigue, who is the hero of the tragedy, and deeply enamoured of Chimene, is called upon to revenge a heinous insult done to his father by the father of his mistress; and he delineates the distress of his situation, in the following manner; certainly with great beauty of expression and versification, and with peculiar elegance of description, but not as a real sufferer:—

Percé jusqu' au fond du coeur
D'une atteinte imprevue aussi bien que mortelle;

Miserable vengeur d'une trop juste querelle,
Et malheureux objet d'une injuste rigueur,
Je demeure immobile, et mon ame abattue
Cede au coup qui me tue.

This harangue would better suit a descriptive novelist or narrator of the story, than the person actually concerned. Let us make the experiment. Let us change the verbs and pronouns from the first person into the third; and, instead of supposing that Rodrigue speaks, let us imagine that the state of his mind is described by a spectator: "Pierced, even to the heart, by an unforeseen, as well as mortal stroke, the miserable avenger of a just quarrel, and the unhappy object of unjust severity, *he remains* motionless, and *his* broken spirit *yields* to the blow that destroys him."

Il demeure immobile, et *son* ame abattue
Cede au coup qui *le* tue.

Try the soliloquy of Hamlet by the same test; and, without inserting the words "he said," which render it dramatic, the change will be impossible. Try also the following lines from Virgil: they are taken from that

celebrated and well-known passage, where Dido expresses to Anna the passion she had conceived for Æneas.

Quis novus hic nostris successit sedibus hospes?
Quem sese ore ferens! quam forti pectore et armis!
Credo equidem, nec vana fides, genus esse deorum, &c.

It may be observed in general, that, whenever a speech seems proper and intelligible with the change of persons above-mentioned, and without inserting some such words as, "he said," or, "he replied," it is narration, it is description; but can scarcely be called the language of passion. I am aware, that some passages, even in Shakespeare, may be opposed to this observation. When Macbeth returns from the assassination of Duncan, Lady Macbeth tells him to carry back the daggers, and smear with blood the faces of the king's attendants, meaning to fasten upon them the suspicion of the murder. Macbeth replies,—

I'll go no more;—
I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on't again, I dare not.

Is this the direct and natural expression of

fear? If so, it bears hard against the foregoing remark. But let us reflect attentively. Fear is not the present passion in the mind of Macbeth: a transient desire of another kind for a moment engages him, namely, the desire of giving Lady Macbeth a reason for not returning into the king's apartment. The man who tells you, "I am exceedingly angry, or exceedingly in love, and therefore I act in such or such a manner," does not in these words speak the language either of love or of anger, but of his desire of giving you a reason, or of his making an apology for his behaviour. You believe him because you trust in his veracity, and because you see corresponding evidence in his deportment; not that the words, "I am angry, or I am in love," independent of tones of voice, looks, or gestures, express either love or anger.

It may also be objected, that "the excellence of dramatic writing consists in its imitating with truth and propriety the manners and passions of mankind. If, therefore, a dramatic writer, capable of describing and of narrating with elegance and propriety,

is nevertheless incapable of expressing the language and sentiments of passion, he fails in the sole end and purpose of his art, and of consequence can afford no pleasure. Contrary to this, many tragedies are seen and read with uncommon applause, and excite even the liveliest feelings, which, if tried by the above-mentioned standard, would be reckoned defective." To remove this objection, it may be observed, that those sympathetic emotions that interest us in the happiness and misery of others, and yield us the highest pleasure at theatrical entertainments, are, by the wise and beneficial institutions of nature, exceedingly apt to be excited; so apt, that if any concomitant circumstances, though of a different kind, whether melancholy or joyful, draw the mind from its usual state of indifference, and dispose it to a state of extreme sensibility, the slightest incident or expression will call forth our sympathy. Now, in dramatic performances, many things concur to throw the mind into a susceptible and tender mood, and chiefly, elegance of expression, harmony of composition, and delightful

imagery. These working upon the mind, and being all united to impress us with the notion of certain events or circumstances very interesting to persons of certain qualities and dispositions, our imaginations are immediately stimulated and in action; we figure to ourselves the characters which the poet intends to exhibit; we take part in their interests, and enter into their passions as warmly as if they were naturally expressed. Thus it appears, that it is often with beings of our own formation that we lament or rejoice, imagining them to be the workmanship of another. And indeed this delusion will ever prevail with people of warm imaginations, if what the poet invents be tolerable, or not worse than insipid. We may also observe, that we are much more subject to delusions of this kind, when dramatic performances are exhibited on the stage, and have their effect supported by the scenery, by the dresses of the players, and by their action.

If this remark, that our own imaginations contribute highly to the pleasure we receive from works of invention, be well founded,

it will explain the reason why men of accurate discernment, and of understandings sufficiently polished, often differ widely from one another, and, at times, widely from themselves, in their opinions concerning works of taste. The imagination is a faculty of a nature so versatile and so variable, that at one time it is animated and fruitful of images; at other times, it is cold, barren, and languishing. At a fruitful moment, it will embellish the dullest performance with the most brilliant ornaments; it will impose them on you as genuine, and so entice you to bestow applause. At other times, it will be niggardly, even of the assistance that is necessary. Hence, too, the reason why critics of active imaginations are generally disposed to favour. Read a performance, even of slight and superficial merit, to a person of lively fancy, and he will probably applaud. Some circumstances strike him: they assemble a group of images in his own mind; they please him, and he perceives not, in the ardour of the operation, that the picture is his own, and not that of the writer. He examines it coolly: the phantom

that pleased him vanishes: he is ashamed of the delight it yielded him, and of the praises he so freely bestowed. It follows also, on the same principle, that men of lively imaginations receive more exquisite pleasure from works of fancy, than those whose inventive faculties are not so vigorous. Upon the whole, it is manifest, that a great portion of the delight we receive from poetry and fine writing, depends no less on the state of our own minds, than on the intrinsic excellence of the performance. It is also obvious, that, though the description of a passion or affection may give us pleasure, whether it be described by the agent or the spectator, yet, to those who would apply the inventions of the poet to the uses of philosophical investigation, it is far from being of equal utility with a passion exactly imitated. The talent of imitation is very different from that of description, and far superior *.

No writer has hitherto appeared who

* The author of the Elements of Criticism is, if I mistake not, the first writer who has taken any notice of this important distinction between the imitation and description of passion.

possesses in a more eminent degree than Shakespeare, the power of imitating the passions. All of them seem familiar to him; the boisterous no less than the gentle; the benign no less than the malignant. There are several writers, as there are many players, who are successful in imitating some particular passions, but who appear stiff, aukward, and unnatural, in the expression of others. Some are capable of exhibiting very striking representations of resolute and intrepid natures, but cannot so easily bend themselves to those that are softer and more complacent. Others, again, seem full of amiable affection and tenderness, but cannot exalt themselves to the boldness of the hero, or magnanimity of the patriot. The genius of Shakespeare is unlimited. Possessing extreme sensibility, and uncommonly susceptible, he is the Proteus of the drama; he changes himself into every character, and enters easily into every condition of human nature.

> O youths and virgins! O declining eld!
> O pale misfortune's slaves! O ye who dwell
> Unknown with humble quiet! Ye who wait
> In courts, and fill the golden seat of kings:

O sons of sport and pleasure! O thou wretch
That weep'st for jealous love, and the sore wound
Of conscious guilt, or death's rapacious hand,
That left the void of hope! O ye who mourn
In exile! Ye who thro' th' embattled field
Seek bright renown; or who for nobler palms
Contend, the leaders of a public cause!
Hath not his faithful tongue
Told you the fashion of your own estate,
The secrets of your bosom * ?

Many dramatic writers of different ages are capable, occasionally, of breaking out with great fervour of genius in the natural language of strong emotion. No writer of antiquity is more distinguished for abilities of this kind than Euripides. His whole heart and soul seem torn and agitated by the force of the passion he imitates. He ceases to be Euripides; he is Medea; he is Orestes. Shakespeare, however, is most eminently distinguished, not only by these occasional sallies, but by imitating the passion in all its aspects, by pursuing it through all its windings and labyrinths, by moderating or accelerating its impetuosity according to the influence of other principles and of ex-

* Akenside.

ternal events, and finally by combining it in a judicious manner with other passions and propensities, or by setting it aptly in opposition. He thus unites the two essential powers of dramatic invention, that of forming characters; and that of imitating, in their natural expressions, the passions and affections of which they are composed. It is, therefore, my intention to examine some of his remarkable characters, and to analyze their component parts. An exercise no less adapted to improve the heart, than to inform the understanding. My intention is to make poetry subservient to philosophy, and to employ it in tracing the principles of human conduct. The design surely is laudable: of the execution, I have no right to determine.

ESSAY I.

ON THE CHARACTER OF MACBETH.

THE human mind, in different situations and circumstances, undergoes many extraordinary changes, and assumes a variety of different aspects. Men of gaiety and cheerfulness become reserved and unsocial: the beneficent temper, losing its kindness and complacency, becomes morose and uncomplying: the indolent man leaves his retirement: the man of business becomes inactive: and men of gentle and kind affections acquire habits of cruelty and revenge. As these changes affect the temper, and not the faculties of the mind, they are produced by irregular and outrageous passions. In order, therefore, to explain any unusual alteration of temper or character, we must consider

the nature of the ruling passion, and observe its tendency.

In the character of Macbeth, we have an instance of a very extraordinary change. In the following passages we discover the complexion and bias of his mind in its natural and unperverted state.

> Brave Macbeth, (well he deserves that name,)
> Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
> Which smok'd with bloody execution,
> Like Valour's minion, carved out his passage.

The particular features of his character are more accurately delineated by Lady Macbeth.

> Glamis thou art, and Cawdor;—and shalt be
> What thou art promis'd—Yet do I fear thy nature;
> It is too full o'the milk of human kindness,
> To catch the nearest way. Thou would'st be great;
> Art not without ambition; but without
> The illness should attend it.

He is exhibited to us valiant, dutiful to his sovereign, mild, gentle, and ambitious; but ambitious without guilt. Soon after, we find him false, perfidious, barbarous, and vindictive. All the principles in his con-

stitution seem to have undergone a violent and total change. Some appear to be altogether reduced or extirpated; others monstrously overgrown. Ferocity is substituted instead of mildness, treasonable intention instead of a sense of duty. His ambition, however, has suffered no diminution: on the contrary, by having become exceedingly powerful, and by rising to undue pretensions, it seems to have vanquished and suppressed every amiable and virtuous principle. But, in a conflict so important and where the opposing powers were naturally vigorous, and invested with high authority, violent must have been the struggle, and obstinate the resistance. Nor could the prevailing passion have been enabled to contend with virtue, without having gained, at some former period, an unlawful ascendency. Therefore, in treating the history of this revolution, we shall consider how the usurping principle became so powerful; how its powers were exerted in its conflict with opposing principles; and what were the consequences of its victory.

I.—The growth of Macbeth's ambition was so imperceptible, and his treason so unexpected, that the historians of an ignorant age, little accustomed to explain uncommon events by simple causes, and strongly addicted to a superstitious belief in sorcery, ascribed them to præternatural agency. Shakespeare, capable of exalting this fiction, and of rendering it interesting, by his power over the "terrible graces," has adopted it in its full extent. In this part, therefore, having little assistance from the poet, we shall hazard a conjecture, supported by some facts and observations, concerning the power of fancy, aided by partial gratification, to invigorate and inflame our passions.

All men, who possess the seeds of violent passions, will often be conscious of their influence, before they have opportunities of indulging them. By nature provident, and prone to reflection, we look forward with eagerness into futurity, and anticipate our enjoyments. Never completely satisfied with our present condition, we embrace in imagination the happiness that is to come. But

happiness is relative to constitution; it depends on the gratification of our desires; and the happiness of mankind is various, because the desires of the heart are various. The nature, therefore, of anticipated enjoyment is agreeable to the nature of our desires. Men of indolent dispositions, and addicted to pleasure, indulge themselves in dreams of festivity. Those, again, who have in their constitution the latent principles of avarice, administer to the gratification of their fatal propensity, by reveries of ideal opulence. Dignity, parade, and magnificence, are ever present to the ambitious man: laurels, if he pursue literary fame: battles and conquest, if his genius be warlike. Whoever will cultivate an acquaintance with himself, and would know to what passions he is most exposed, should attend to the operations of fancy, and by remarking the objects she with greatest pleasure exhibits, he may discern, with tolerable accuracy, the nature of his own mind, and the principles most likely to rule him. Excursions of the imagination, except in minds idly extravagant, are commonly governed

by the probability of success. They are also regulated by moral considerations*; for no man indulging visions of ideal felicity, embrues his hands in the blood of the guiltless, or suffers himself in imagination to be unjust or perfidious. Yet, by this imaginary indulgence, harmless as it may appear, our passions become immoderate. This is manifest from the following observations.

When the mind is agitated by violent passions, the thoughts presented to us are of a corresponding character. The angry man thinks of injury, perfidy, or insult. Under the influences of fear, we figure to ourselves dangers that have no reality, and tremble without a cause†. Minds, differently fash-

* See Hutcheson on the origin of our ideas of beauty and harmony.

† Vitas hinnuleo me similis, Chloë,
Quaerenti pavidam montibus aviis
Matrem, non sine vano
Aurarum, et silvae metu.
Nam seu mobilibus vitis inhorruit
Ad ventum foliis, seu virides rubum
Dimovere lacertae,
Et corde et genibus tremit. Hor.

ioned, and under the influence of different passions, receive from the same objects dissimilar impressions. Exhibit the same beautiful valley to the miser and to the poet. Elegant and lovely images arise in the poet's mind: Dryads preside in the groves, and Naiads in the fountains. Notions of wealth seize the heart of the miser: he computes the profits of the meadows and cornfields, and envies the possessor. The mind, dwelling with pleasure on these images that coincide with its present humour, or agree with the present passion, embellishes and improves them. The poet, by figuring additional lawns and mountains, renders the landscape more beautiful, or more sublime: but the miser, moved by no compassion for Wood-nymphs or Naiads, lays waste the forest, changes the windings of the river into a dead canal, and solicits wealth at the expence of beauty. Now, as the influences of passion govern and give a train to our thoughts, these, in return, nourish and promote the passion. If any object appears to us more striking and excellent than usual, it communicates a stronger impulse, and excites a

keener and more vehement desire. When the lover discovers, or fancies he discovers, new charms in the character of his mistress, if her complexion glow with a softer blush, if her manner and attitude seem more engaging, his love waxes ardent, and his ardour ungovernable. Thus imaginary representations, more even than real objects, stimulate our desires; and our passions, administering fewel to themselves, are immoderately inflamed. Joy is in this manner enlivened; anger more keenly exasperated; envy burns with additional malice; and melancholy, brooding over images of misery and disappointment, is tortured with anguish, and plunges into despair.

Thus far ambition may be invigorated, assisted merely by a lively temperament and a glowing imagination. Prompted by its incitements, we engage with eagerness in the career of glory; and with persevering courage undergo fatigue and encounter danger. But though imagination may dazzle and inflame, the prudent man, in the pursuit of honours, limits his desires to objects within his reach. The most active spirit, confined

to a narrow sphere, is never desirous of unattainable glory, but is ambitious of being distinguished in his condition. If, however, by succeeding in inferior enterprizes, higher objects are exhibited to us, our ambition, by partial gratification, becomes more violent than before. In producing this effect, the following causes co-operate.

The temporary and accidental emotion of joy, occasioned by success, enlivens and animates the passion upon which it depends. You love your friend; he returns unexpectedly from a long journey; your joy on his arrival heightens your affection, and you receive him with transport.

> Non ego sanius
> Bacchabor Edonis: recepto
> Dulce mihi furere est amico. Hor.

The new object appearing more excellent than the former, excites a livelier appetite. To the churchman who was meek and moderate in pursuit of inferior dignity, exhibit a mitre, and you spoil his peace.

The proximity of the object, because nothing intermediate diverts our attention,

quickens and promotes the passion. The profligate heir, who longs for the death of an avaricious father, is more eagerly impatient during his last moments than during the course of a tedious life. And the nearer the hour of assignation approaches, the heart of the lover throbs with a keener and more intense desire. To these illustrations the following passage, from a celebrated* historian, is extremely apposite: "James, harrassed with his turbulent and factious subjects, cast a wishful eye to the succession of England; and, in proportion as the queen advanced in years, his desire increased of mounting that throne."

Success, as it produces vanity, invigorates our ambition. Eminently or unexpectedly distinguished, we fancy ourselves endowed with superior merit, and entitled to higher honour. Alexander, after the conquest of Persia, grew more vain and more extravagantly ambitious than before.

In this manner, by joy, by the prospect, and proximity of a more splendid object, and by vanity, all depending on partial gratification, the passion is swelled and be-

* Hume.

comes excessive. Macbeth having repelled the inroads of the islanders, and having vanquished a numerous host of Norwegians, is rewarded by his king, and revered by his countrymen. He rises to unexpected honours: his ambition, fostered by imagination, and confirmed by success, becomes immoderate; and his soul, elevated above measure, aspires to sovereignty.

II. Every variation of character and passion is accompanied with corresponding changes in the sentiments of the spectator. Macbeth engaged in the defence of his country, and pursuing the objects of a laudable ambition, is justly honoured and esteemed. But the distraction which ensues from the conflict between vicious and virtuous principles, renders him the object of compassion mixed with disapprobation.

The chief obstacle in the way of our selfish desires proceeds from the opposition of our moral faculties. Invested by nature with supreme authority to judge concerning the passions of mankind, they exert themselves in restraining their impetuosity, and

in preserving the harmony of the internal system. Accordingly, when the notion of seizing the crown is suggested to Macbeth, he appears shocked and astonished. Justice and humanity shudder at the design: he regards his own heart with amazement: and recoils with horror from the guilty thought.

> This supernatural soliciting
> Cannot be ill; cannot be good. If ill,
> Why hath it given me earnest of success,
> Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
> If good, why do I yield to that suggestion,
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature?

Though virtuous principles appear in this instance to predominate, his ambition is not repulsed. The means of gratifying it seem shocking and impracticable; and he abandons the enterprize without renouncing the passion. The passion continues vehement: it perseveres with obstinacy: it harrasses and importunes him. He still desires; but, deterred by his moral feelings, he is unable to proceed directly, and indulges romantic wishes.

If chance will have me King, why, chance may crown me,
Without my stir.

It appears from this and some following passages, that, in agony, and distracted with contending principles, hesitating and irresolute, anxious for the event, but afraid of promoting it, he had abandoned the design of murdering Duncan, and had formed some extravagant expectation of inheriting the crown by right of succession. Thus he recovers some portion of his tranquillity.

Come what, come may,
Time and the hour runs thro' the roughest day.

He enjoys an interval of composure till an unexpected obstacle rouzes and alarms him.

King. My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves
In drops of sorrow.—Sons, kinsmen, Thanes,
And you whose places are the nearest, know,
We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm; whom we name hereafter
The prince of Cumberland.

The surprize, and the uneasy sensation excited by the perception of difficulty, agitate

the mind of Macbeth, and their emotions coinciding with his ambition, renew and increase its violence.

> The prince of Cumberland!—That is a step,
> On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
> For in my way it lies.

But conscience and his humanity are again alarmed, again interfere, and shew him the horror of his designs.

> Stars, hide your fires,
> Let not light see my black and deep desires.

Habituated passions possess superior advantages over those opposite principles which operate by a violent and sudden impulse. For, so delicate is the constitution of the human mind, that lively feelings, unless they form the temper by being confirmed by action, are enfeebled by repetition and frequent exercise. The horror and aversion excited by enormous wickedness, unless we act in conformity to them, "*are mere passive "impressions, which, by being repeated,

* Butler's Analogy, Part I. chap. v.

"grow weaker;" and though their resistance against an habituated passion be animated, it is of short duration. They subside: they are overwhelmed; but not extinguished. Macbeth, in the following conference, appears reconciled to designs of treason: he can think of them calmly, and without abhorrence: and all the opposition he has henceforth to encounter, will arise, not from feeling, but from reflection.

> *Macb.* My dearest love!
> Duncan comes here to-night.
> *La. Macb.* And when goes hence?
> *Macb.* To-morrow, as he purposes.
> *La. Macb.* Oh! never
> Shall sun that morrow see.
> *Macb.* We shall speak further.

Inward contention of mind naturally provokes soliloquy. The reason of this appearance is obvious. In the beginning of life, feeble and unable to assist ourselves, we depend entirely upon others; we are constantly in society; and, of course, if we are affected by any violent emotions, we are accustomed to utter them. Consequently,

by force of association and habit, when they return excessive on any future occasion, impatient of restraint, they will not be arrested by reflection, but vent themselves as they were wont. We may observe, in confirmation of this remark, that children are often prone to soliloquy: and so are men of lively passions. In children, the association is vigorous and entire: in men of lively passions, habits are more tenacious than with men of a cooler temperament. When the contending principles are of equal energy, our emotions are uttered in broken and incoherent sentences, and the disordered state of our mind is expressed by interrupted gestures, absence of attention, and an agitated demeanour.

> *Banquo*. Look how our partner's rapt.——
> *La. Mach*. Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men
> May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
> Look like the time.

But, when the inward disorder proceeds from the violence of passion, unopposed by internal feelings, and thwarted only by

external circumstances, desirous of success, doubtful concerning the means, delivered from opposing principles, and capable of reflecting, without abhorrence, on intended injury, our soliloquies, if we are disposed to them, are more coherent. Macbeth, reasoning anxiously concerning the consequences of his design, reflecting on the opinions of mankind, on the hatred and infamy he must incur, and on the resentment he must encounter, overcome by fear, relinquishes his undertaking.

If it were *done*, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly: if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease, success; that but this blow
Might be the Be-all, and the End-all *here*,
But *here*, upon this bank and shoal of time:
We'd jump the life to come.—But, in these cases,
We still have judgment *here;* that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murth'rer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan

Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead, like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against
The deep damnation of his taking off:
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in ev'ry eye,
That tears shall drown the wind.—
We will proceed no further in this business:
He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which should be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.

Thus, the irregular passion is again repulsed: yet symptoms of the decay of virtue are manifest. Immediate instinctive aversion, in cases of censure, accompanies the decisions of our moral faculty: and those who are deterred from crimes, merely by the dread of punishment, and a regard to the opinions of mankind, betray a vitiated and depraved constitution*. The lively feelings, opposed to ambition, unable, by the vivacity of their first impression, to ex-

* Tu nihil admittes in te formidine poenae;
Sit spes fallendi; miscebis sacra profanis. Hor.

tirpate the habit, languish, and are enfeebled. The irregular passion, like the persevering Fabius, gathers strength by delay: the virtuous principle, like the gallant, but unsupported Hannibal, suffers diminution, even by success. Thus, it is manifest, that the contest between the obstinacy of an habituated passion, and the vehemence of an animated feeling, is unequal; and that there is infinite danger even in the apparently innocent and imaginary indulgence of a selfish passion. The harmony of the internal system is nicely adjusted; and the excessive tension or relaxation of any of the parts produces irregular and discordant tones.

The opinions of mankind are variable: for nations and communities, no less than individuals, are liable to prejudice. Particular emergencies and prepossessions mislead the judgment; and we applaud, at one time, what we blame at another. A system of conduct, founded on the opinion of others, is, therefore, unstable, inconsistent, and often vicious. Macbeth, considering the assassination of Duncan as a deed deserving punishment, is deterred from his enterprize;

but, reflecting upon it as an event which he desired, but durst not accomplish, his courage is questioned, and his honour impeached. When the sense of honour is corrupted, virtue expires. Influenced by fatal prejudices, and flattering himself with the hope of impunity, he finally determines himself, and engages to execute the black design.

La. Mach. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour,
As thou art in desire? Would'st thou have that,
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem?
Letting *I dare not* wait upon *I would?*
Mach. Pr'ythee, peace:
I dare do all that may become a man.—
If we should fail!
La. Mach. We fail!
But screw your courage to the sticking place,
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep, &c.
Mach. I'm settled, and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.

In the natural and healthful state of the mind, all its operations are regular and correct. The external organs of the senses, corresponding with memory, present objects

to the understanding; and we regulate our actions according to the notices they communicate. But, when the mind is seized and occupied by violent passions, its operations are disturbed, and the notices we receive from the senses are disregarded. The soldier, in the field of battle, eager to signalize his valour, perceives not that he is wounded, till he falls. The priests of Cybele, actuated by wild enthusiasm, inflicted wounds on their own bodies, and seemed insensible of the pain. In like manner, the notices communicated to the soul of Macbeth, agitated and shaken by tumultuous passions, are wild, broken, and incoherent: and reason, beaming at intervals, heightens the horror of his disorder.

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come let me clutch
thee:—
I have thee not; and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision! sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind; a false creation
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.—

Thou marshal'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
Or else worth all the rest:—I see thee still;
And on thy blade, and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
Which was not so before.—There's no such thing.

Let us review the conflict. Ambition, grown habitual and inveterate in the soul of Macbeth, suggests the idea of assassination. The sense of virtue, compassion, and other kindred principles, are alarmed, and oppose. His ruling passion is repulsed, but not enfeebled. Resigning himself to the hope of profiting by some future emergency, he renounces the idea of violence. A difficulty appears: it renews, rouzes, and inflames his ambition. The principles of virtue again oppose; but, by exercise and repetition, they are, for a time, enfeebled: they excite no abhorrence: and he reflects, with composure, on his design. But, in reflecting, the apprehension of danger, and the fear of retribution alarm him. He abandons his purpose; is deemed irresolute: not less innocent for not daring to execute what he dares to desire, he is charged with cowardice: impatient of the

charge, and indignant; harrassed by fear, by the consciousness of guilt, and by humanity struggling to resume her influence, he rushes headlong upon his bane.

III. We come now to consider the effects produced in the mind of Macbeth by the indulgence of the vicious passion. Invested with royalty, he has attained the summit of his desires. His ambition is completely gratified. Will he, therefore, enjoy repose? Unmolested by anxiety and fruitless wishes, will he enjoy the happiness of his condition, and the dignity he has so dearly purchased? Or will the principles of virtue that opposed his preferment, baffled and put to shame, submit, without murmuring, to the yoke; and, unable to recal the past, acquiesce, and be silent?

All cases of internal conflict and commotion suppose vigorous and opposing principles. But principles inherent in our constitutions are seldom extirpated. Suppose them vanquished. The contending passion is gratified. A passion, when gratified, ceases to operate: it no longer exists; and

the mind is left vacant. But passions or propensities that have been suppressed by incompatible and more powerful principles, still remain in the mind; and when opposition is removed, they arise and resume their station. The profligate, hurried away by unruly appetites, plunges into every species of excess: and when his desires are sated, conscience, formerly active, but disregarded, overwhelms him with deep contrition. This state of mind continues, till the irregular appetites recover strength, solicit indulgence, and are obeyed. Regret follows: and his life is thus divided between the extravagance of illicit desire, and the despondency of repentance. In Macbeth, the amiable and congenial sentiments of humanity and compassion, a sense of duty, and a regard to the opinions of mankind, contended with ambition. Their efforts were ineffectual, but their principles were not extinguished. Formerly, they warned and intreated; but, when the deed is perpetrated, and no adversary is opposed to them, they return with violence, they accuse and condemn. Macbeth, alarmed by his feelings, now operating

without controul, reflects with astonishment on his conduct; and his soul, darkened with horror, shudders and is confounded at the atrocity of his guilt. He feels himself the object of universal hatred and indignation. Religious sentiments, formerly weak and disregarded, are now animated by his confusion; and, borrowing their complexion from his present temper, they terrify and overwhelm him. Amazed at the atrocity of his own proceedings, conscious of perfidy and injustice, and of the resentment they will excite; apprehensive, that both heaven and earth are stirred up against him, his fancy is haunted with tremendous images, and his soul distracted with remorse and terror.

I have done the deed:—Did'st thou not hear a noise?—
There's one did laugh in his sleep, and one cried, *Murder!*
That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them.—
One cried, *God bless us!* and, *Amen!* the other;
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands
Listening their fear. I could not say, Amen,
When they did say, God bless us.——
But wherefore could not I pronounce, Amen?
I had most need of blessing, and Amen
Stuck in my throat.——

Methought I heard a voice cry, *Sleep no more!*
Macbeth doth murder sleep.——
Still it cry'd, *Sleep no more!* to all the house;
Glamis hath murder'd sleep; and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more.

Macbeth, elevated with high and aspiring wishes, dazzled with the glare of royalty, and instigated by keen ambition, entertains opinions bordering on impiety; and, thoughts of retribution in a future state of existence seeming to affect him slightly, he would "jump the life to come." But, having perpetrated the bloody deed, every noise appals him; and, when others prefer their orisons to heaven, he cannot say Amen.

If impelled by irregular and headstrong passions, we not only transgress the limits of rectitude, but are guilty of heinous acts of oppression and violence, reflecting on the sentiments of mankind, and measuring them by our own, we imagine ourselves no less abhorred by the spectator, than by the sufferer. Conscious of our crimes, and apprehensive of the resentment and indignation they have necessarily excited, we dread the punishment they deserve, and endeavour

to avoid it. By suspicion and distrust, the necessary offspring of treachery, the soul is for ever tormented. Perfidious ourselves, we repose no confidence in mankind, and are incapable of friendship. We are particularly fearful of all those to whom eminent virtue and integrity have given a strong sense of injustice, and to whom wisdom and intrepidity have given power to punish. Prompted by our fears, we hate every amiable and exalted character, we wage war with the virtuous, and endeavour, by their destruction, to prevent our own. So tyrannical is the dominion of vice, that it compels us to hate what nature, having ordained for our benefit, has rendered lovely, and recommended to our esteem.

To be thus, is nothing,
But to be safely thus:—Our fears in Banquo
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature
Reigns that, which would be feared. 'Tis much he dares,
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
To act in safety. There is none but he,
Whose being I do fear: and under him
My genius is rebuk'd.

Whoever regards with suitable veneration the rights of mankind, the sanctity of friendship, and the duty we owe to legal authority; whoever with these, possesses a heart susceptible of tenderness and of compassion, will have a higher sense of injury and injustice than men of colder complexions, and less strongly impressed with the importance of social duties. Therefore, if a man of uncommon sensibility, adorned with amiable and beneficient dispositions, misled by some pernicious appetite, commits acts of cruelty and oppression, he will be more apt, by reflecting on his own conduct, to conceive the resentment and indignation it excites, than men of a different temper. Reflecting on the compassion and resentment that would have arisen in his own mind, on the view of crimes similar to those he has himself perpetrated, he becomes afraid of the punishment he would himself have inflicted. Thus, instigated by his fears, and, imagining himself universally hated, he conceives a sentiment of universal hatred; and, as his fears are exactly proportioned to his feelings and sensibility, so are his hatred and malevolence.

In like manner, a man of no sensibility, of little beneficence, and little affected by social obligation, carried by avarice or ambition to commit acts of injustice, and having no lively conceptions, from his own feelings, of the resentment he has excited, will, consequently, be less afraid of mankind, and of course, less violent in his hatred. It follows, that, in the circumstances of having procured undue possessions by inhuman means, and of desiring to preserve them, men of innate sensibility will be more cruel and sanguinary, than men naturally severe, rugged, and insensible. May not these observations unravel a seeming difficulty in the histories of Sylla, and Augustus, of Nero, and of Herod? Sylla and Augustus, naturally severe, having attained the summit of their desires, had no imaginary apprehensions of punishment, and ended their days in peace. Nero and Herod, naturally of soft and amiable dispositions, betrayed by unruly passions, committed acts of cruelty, were conscious of their crimes, dreaded the resentment they deserved, and, in order to avoid it, became infamous and inhuman.

By considering Sylla and Augustus in this light, some extraordinary circumstances in their conduct, much celebrated by some modern writers, namely the resignation of the dictatorship by the one, and the apparent clemency of the other, after he rose to the imperial dignity, seem divested of their merit; and, without having recourse to moderate or magnanimous sentiments, may easily be explained, as being perfectly consonant to the general tone of their characters. Sylla resigned the dictatorship, without any dread of suffering punishment for his antecedent cruelties, not because he had extirpated all those he had injured, but because his sensibility and his power of discerning moral excellence being originally languid, he felt no abhorrence of his own ferocity; and therefore, incapable of conceiving how any but real sufferers should feel or resent his barbarity, he was incapable of apprehension. Augustus, naturally of an unfeeling temper, committed inhuman actions in pursuing the honours he aspired to, and having established his authority as absolutely and as independently as he wished for, he had no

sense of his former inhumanity, had no regret for the past, and no fear of the future. Reasoning on the same principles, we may easily reconcile some appearances of benignity and tender affection in the conduct of Nero and of Herod, to their natural and original dispositions. That, in the early part of their lives, they discovered gentle and benign affections is unquestioned. But their subsequent cruelties, and particularly those related by ecclesiastical writers, have led men, indignant of their crimes, to pronounce them, in the very structure and constitution of their minds, monstrous and inhuman. Thus, from excessive resentment and indignation, we lessen the enormity of their guilt, charging that ferocity upon nature, which was the effect of their own impetuous and ungoverned passions. Sensibility is in itself amiable, and disposes us to benevolence: but, in corrupted minds, by infusing terror, it produces hatred and inhumanity. So dangerous is the dominion of vice, that being established in the mind, it bends to its baneful purposes even the principles of virtue. Lady Macbeth, of

a character invariably savage, perhaps too savage to be a genuine representation of nature*, proceeds easily, and without reluctance, to the contrivance of the blackest crimes. Macbeth, of a softer temper, and full of the "milk of human kindness," struggles, and is reluctant. Lady Macbeth encourages and incites him. He commits the deed, trembles, and is filled with horror. Lady Macbeth enjoys perfect composure, is neither shocked nor terrified, and reproves him for his fears.

> Why, worthy Thane,
> Do you unbend your noble strength to think
> So brain-sickly of things?——
> My hands are of your colour, but I scorn
> To wear a heart so white.

Macbeth, instigated by his apprehensions, meditates another act of barbarity. Lady Macbeth, so far from being afraid of consequences, or from having contrived another assassination, is even ignorant of his intentions; but on being informed of them, she very easily acquiesces.

* Elements of Criticism.

La. Macb. Come on; gentle my lord,
Sleek o'er your rugged looks; be bright and jovial
Among your guests to-night.
Macb. Oh! full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
Thou know'st, that Banquo, and his Fleance lives.
La. Macb. What's to be done?
Macb. Be innocent of the knowledge,
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, feeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond,
Which keeps me pale.

Macbeth, urged by his terrors, adds one act of cruelty to another; and thus, instead of vanquishing his fears, he augments them. His agony increases, and renders him still more barbarous and distrustful.

There's not a thane of them, but in his house
I keep a servant fee'd—
The castle of Macduff I will surprize, &c.

He, at length, meets with the punishment due to his enormous cruelty.

Macduff. Hail, king! for so thou art. Behold where stands
Th' usurper's cursed head.

Thus, by considering the rise and progress of a ruling passion, and the fatal consequences of its indulgence, we have shown, how a beneficent mind may become inhuman: and how those who are naturally of an amiable temper, if they suffer themselves to be corrupted, will become more ferocious and more unhappy than men of a constitution originally hard and unfeeling. The formation of our characters depends considerably upon ourselves; for we may improve, or vitiate, every principle we receive from nature.

ESSAY II.

ON THE CHARACTER OF HAMLET.

IN analyzing the mind of Hamlet, I shall accompany him in his different situations. I shall observe the various principles of action that govern him in various circumstances; and sum up the whole with a general view of his character.

In his first appearance, he discovers grief, aversion, and indignation. These emotions are in themselves indifferent: they are neither objects of censure nor of applause: they are of a secondary nature, and arise from some antecedent passion or affection. To judge, therefore, of their propriety, we must examine their motives, and the temper or state of mind that produces them. For

we may grieve for the loss of a vicious gratification, no less than for those that are virtuous: and we may conceive aversion at worthy characters, no less than at their opposites. But the grief of Hamlet is for the death of a father: he entertains aversion against an incestuous uncle, and indignation at the ingratitude and guilt of a mother. Grief is passive: if its object be irretrievably lost, it is attended with no desires, and rouses no active principle. After the first emotions, it disposes us to silence, solitude, and inaction. If it is blended with other passions, its operations will pass unnoticed, lost in the violence of other emotions, though even these it may have originally excited, and may secretly stimulate. Accordingly, though sorrow be manifest in the features and demeanour of Hamlet, aversion and indignation are the feelings he expresses. Aversion not only implies dislike and disapprobation of certain qualities, but also an apprehension of suffering by their communion; and, consequently, a desire of avoiding them. As it arises on the view of groveling and sordid qualities, we treat the character they

belong to with contempt, rather than with indignation. They influence the imagination; we turn from them with disgust and loathing, as if they were capable of tainting us by their contagion; and, if those that possess them discover any expectation of our regarding them, we are offended at their pretensions. Claudius, endeavouring to caress and flatter Hamlet, of whose virtues and abilities he is afraid, thinks of honouring him by a claim of consanguinity, and is replied to with symptoms of contempt and aversion. Yet Hamlet delivers himself ambiguously, inclined to vent his displeasure, but unwilling to incur suspicion.

> *King.* But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—
> *Ham.* A little more than kin, and less than kind.
> *King.* How is it, that the clouds still hang on you?
> *Ham.* Not so, my lord, I am too much i' the sun.

Aversion has no reference to any thing amiable or respectable. Indignation is different. It arises, as the etymology of the words indicates, from the sense of something unworthy. But the unworthy in human conduct affects us by contrast: and this

contrast is either between the antecedent behaviour or imagined good character of the agent, and the particular actions that expose him to our present censure; or it is between the merits of a sufferer, and the injuries he sustains. We say, your deed is unworthy, if you act inconsistently with your usual good conduct; and that you suffer unworthily, if behaving honourably you are defamed. The indignation of Hamlet arises from both of these sources, both from the merit of his father, and from the behaviour of Gertrude. It is, therefore, vehement. But, as the circumstances of the times render it dangerous for him to discover his sentiments, and the real state of his mind, he governs them, as far as the ardour of his emotions allows him, and disguises their external symptoms. His indignation labours for utterance; and his reason strives to restrain it. He inveighs with keenness, but obliquely, against the insincerity of Gertrude's sorrow; and, in an indirect, but stinging manner, opposes her duty to her actual conduct.

Seems, Madam? nay, it is; I know not *seems*.
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected 'haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, modes, shews of grief,
That can denote me truly.—These, indeed, seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But I have that within, which passeth shew;
These, but the trappings, and the suits of woe.

The human mind, possessed of distinguished faculties, and actuated by various principles, is, nevertheless, extremely limited. As the understanding is capable of attending but to a certain number of objects at a time; so the heart is never at the same time influenced by a number of violent passions. Perhaps there is a greater difference in the minds of men, in regard to the capacity of the understanding, than in regard to that of the heart. One man, perhaps, may contemplate at the same moment a wider range of objects than another, but cannot, at the same moment, be agitated by a greater number of passions. It may, indeed, be a question, how far the capacity of the under-

standing may not influence the passions. In governing them, it may have some effect, as it may enable us to consider the cause or subject of our emotions under different aspects. For, does it not often happen, that a partial view of an object renders the passion it excites more violent? Yet, if the soul is exceedingly moved, our thoughts will not arise in their natural and common order, but will be entirely regulated by the present passion or state of mind. It is a certain fact, confirmed by universal experience, and it may be laid down as an important axiom in the study of human nature, that our notions and opinions are ever influenced by our present temper. Happy is the man who is often calm and dispassionate, who, impelled by no eager appetite, nor urged by any restless affection, sees every object by the unerring light of reason, and is not imposed upon by the fallacious medium of his desires. Men of a susceptible nature, the prey of successive emotions, for ever happy or miserable in extremes, often capricious and inconsistent, ought to cherish their lucid intervals, and dwell upon, and treasure up in their minds

those maxims of wisdom and virtue, that, in times of internal tumult, may assuage their disorder, and administer peace to their souls. In consequence of the limited nature of the human heart, ever apt to be engrossed and occupied by present emotions, and of the power of passion to enslave the understanding, and possess it with notions suited to its own complexion; the mind of Hamlet, violently agitated, and filled with displeasing and painful images, loses all sense of felicity. He even wishes for a change of being. The appearance is wonderful, and leads us to inquire into the affections and opinions that could render him so despondent. The death of his father was a natural evil, and as such he endures it. That he is excluded from succeeding immediately to the royalty that belongs to him, seems to affect him slightly; for to vehement and vain ambition he appears superior. He is moved by finer principles, by an exquisite sense of virtue, of moral beauty and turpitude. The impropriety of Gertrude's behaviour, her ingratitude to the memory of her former husband, and the depravity she discovers in the choice

of a successor, afflict his soul, and cast him into utter agony. Here then is the principle and spring of all his actions: let us observe it closely as it excites other feelings and affections, unites or contends with them, is inflamed as they are inflamed, and governed as they are governed.

It is acknowledged, even by men of corrupted manners, that there is in human nature a supreme, and, in many cases, a powerful principle, that pronounces sentence on the conduct of mankind, and, in well-regulated tempers, is a source of anguish or of delight. In minds uncommonly excellent, it is more frequently a fountain of bitter suffering, than of immediate pleasure. This may seem a paradox; but, by reflecting on the following brief observations, the difficulty will disappear. If our sense of virtue is exceedingly refined, or, in other words, if our standard of moral excellence is exceedingly elevated, comparing our own conduct with this exalted measure, and perceiving the difference, our joy on acting agreeably to the dictates of reason will suffer abatement. Add to this, that ingenuous minds, happy in the

consciousness of their integrity, yet afraid of arrogating too much honour to themselves, will diminish the value of their good actions rather than augment it. The same delicacy of moral sentiment, the same elevated idea of perfection, will heighten the misery of a good man, if he accuses himself of any trespass. It is not the dread of punishment, for punishment is not always inflicted: it is not the pain of infamy, for wicked deeds may be done in secret; but it is the rebuke of an internal censor, who will neither be flattered nor deceived*.

The man whose sense of moral excellence is uncommonly exquisite, will find it a source of pleasure and of pain in his commerce with mankind. Susceptible of every moral impression, the display of virtuous actions will yield him delight, and the contrary excite

* Oime son io son io.
Che giova ch' io non oda e non paventi
I ditti 'el mormorar pell folle volgo,
O l' accuse de saggi, o i fieri morsi
Di troppo acuto o velenoso dente?
Se la mia propria conscienza immonda
Altamente nel cor rimbomba e mugge.
Il Torrismondo dell Tasso.

uneasiness. He will not receive that genuine and supreme felicity in associating with the wealthy and the magnificent, the gay and the loquacious, if they have nothing in their hearts to recommend them, that he will enjoy in the society of gentle, benevolent, and enlightened spirits, though they are not the favourites of fortune, and have not that glitter and false brilliancy of intellectual endowments, that dazzle without being useful, yet often recommend men of slender abilities, and less virtue, to the attention of mankind. As moral qualities are those, principally, that produce and cement his attachments, the esteem he entertains for his associates will be exactly proportioned to their degree of merit. To eraze an established affection, and substitute aversion, or even indifference, in its stead, does violence to our nature; and to see those, for whom we have contracted habits of attachment and regard, act inconsistently with their former conduct, and show dispositions of an immoral kind, and so lay the ax to the root of our fairest friendships, overwhelms us with anguish: our affliction will bear an exact proportion

to our former tenderness, and consequently, to our belief of former merit. Add to this, that even a slight transgression in those we esteem, if it is evidently a transgression, will affect us more sensibly than a gross enormity committed by a person indifferent to us. So delicate is your affection, and so refined your sense of moral excellence, when the moral faculty is softened into a tender attachment, that the sanctity and purity of the heart you love must appear to you without a stain. The triumph and inward joy of a son, on account of the fame and the high desert of a parent, is of a nature very sublime and tender. His sorrow is no less acute and overwhelming, if the son or the parent, united to him by a connection so intimate, have acted unbecomingly, and have incurred disgrace. Such is the condition of Hamlet. Exquisitely sensible of moral beauty and deformity, he discerns turpitude in a parent. Surprize, on a discovery so painful and unexpected, adds bitterness to his sorrow; and led, by the same moral principle, to admire and glory in the high desert of his father, even

this admiration contributes to his uneasiness. Aversion to his uncle, arising from the same origin, has a similar tendency, and augments his anguish. All these feelings and emotions uniting together, are rendered still more violent, being exasperated by his recent interview with the Queen. Agitated and overwhelmed with afflicting images, no soothing, no exhilarating affection can have admission into his heart. His imagination is visited by no vision of happiness; and he wishes for deliverance from his afflictions, by being delivered from a painful existence.

> Oh! that this too too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
> Or that the everlasting had not fix'd
> His cannon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God, O God!
> How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!
> Fie on't! O fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden,
> That grows to seed; things rank, and gross in nature,
> Possess it merely.

By giving vent to any passion, its violence at the time increases. Those, for instance, who express their sorrow by shedding tears, feel themselves at the instant of weeping

more excessively affected than persons of a more reserved and inflexible constitution. Yet, by thus giving vent to their inquietude, they find relief, while those of a taciturn humour are the victims of unabating pain: and the reason is, that the emotion, raised to its highest extreme, can no longer continue equally violent, and so subsides. In cases of this nature, that is, when emotions, by being expressed, become excessive, the mind passes from general reflections to minute and particular circumstances: and imagination, the pliant flatterer of the passion in power, renders these circumstances still more particular, and better adapted to promote its vehemence. In the foregoing lines the reflections are general; but, in these that follow, they become particular; and the emotion waxing stronger, the imagination, by exhibiting suitable images, and by fitting to its purpose even the time between the death and the marriage, renders it excessive.

That it should come to this!
But two months dead! nay, not so much; not two:
So excellent a king, that was, to this,
Hyperian to a satyr! So loving to my mother,

That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly.

The emotion grows still more vehement, and overflows the mind with a tide of corresponding images.

Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month—

Observe too, that Hamlet's indignation is augmented gradually, by admiration of his father, 'So excellent a king;' by abhorrence of Claudius, 'That was, to this, Hyperion to a Satyr;' and, finally, by a stinging reflection on the Queen's inconstancy:

Why, she would hang on him,
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month—

This affects him so severely, that he strives to obliterate the idea.

Let me not think on't—

By this effort he loses sight, for a moment,

of the particular circumstances that gave him pain. The impression, however, is not entirely effaced; and he expresses it by a general reflection.

Frailty, thy name is woman!

This expression is too refined and artificial for a mind strongly agitated: yet, it agrees entirely with such a degree of emotion and pensiveness as disposes us to moralize. Considered as the language of a man violently affected, it is improper: considered in relation to what goes before and follows after, it appears perfectly natural. Hamlet's laboured composure is imperfect; it is exceedingly transient; and he relapses into deeper anguish. Though he turned aside from a painful idea, he was unable to remove the impression, or vary in any considerable degree his state of mind: the impression remained, and restored the idea in its fullest vigour.

A little month; or ere those shoes were old,
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears—Why, she, even she—
O heaven! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,

Would have mourn'd longer—married with my uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules.

It is also observable, that, in consequence of the increasing violence of his emotion, the time so dexterously diminished from two months, to a little month, and to even less than a little month, is rendered as it were visible by allusions and circumstances so striking, as to have in themselves a powerful tendency to stimulate and augment his anguish.

Or ere those shoes were old,
With which she follow'd my poor father's body, &c.

And again:

Within a month—
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing on her galled eyes—
She married!

The crisis of his agitation, heightened to its extremity, is strongly marked in the following exclamation:

Oh, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

The observation following immediately after, is that of a mind reflecting, with some composure, on effects and consequences.

It is not, nor it cannot come to good.

Hamlet, in his retirement, expresses his agony without reserve, and by giving it utterance he receives relief. In public he restrains it, and welcomes his friends with that ease and affability which are the result of polished manners, good sense, and humanity. Influenced by an exquisite sense of propriety, he would do nothing unbecoming*: he therefore suppresses every emotion which others cannot easily enter into: he strives, as much as possible, to bring the tone of his own mind into unison with theirs; he not only conceals his internal affliction, but would appear unconcerned: he would seem sprightly, or at least cheerful: he even jests with his friends; and would have his conversation, though graceful, appear easy and familiar. Yet in his demeanour we discover a certain air of pensiveness and so-

* Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments.

lemnity, arising naturally from his inward uneasiness.

Hor. Hail to your Lordship!
Ham. I am glad to see you well;
Horatio,—or I do forget myself?
Hor. The same, my Lord, and your poor servant ever.
Ham. Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you.
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?
Marcellus!
Mar. My good Lord—
Ham. I am very glad to see you? good even, Sir.
—But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?
Hor. A truant disposition, good my Lord.
Ham. I would not hear your enemy say so;
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence,
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself. I know, you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsenour?
We'll teach you to drink deep, ere you depart.
Hor. My Lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

On a subject so interesting as his father's funeral, he cannot easily command himself; and, reposing confidence in the loyalty of his friend, he does not entirely disguise his emotion. He corrects it, however; and, avoiding any appearance of violence or of

extravagance, he expresses himself with humour.

> I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow student;
> I think, it was to see my mother's wedding.
> *Hor.* Indeed, my Lord, it follow'd hard upon.
> *Ham.* Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral bak'd meats
> Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

Yet he is too violently agitated to preserve, uniformly, the character of a cheerful satirist. He becomes serious.

> Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven,
> Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio.

Having expressed himself strongly, and possessing a delicate sense of propriety, he thinks it necessary to explain the cause. About to preface it with an account of his father, he mentions him:

> My father—

The thought strikes his mind with a sudden and powerful impulse: he pauses: forgets his intention of explaining himself to

Horatio: the image of his father possesses him; and, by the most solemn and striking apostrophe that ever poet invented, he impresses it on his audience.

> Methinks, I see my father!
> *Hor.* Where, my Lord?
> *Ham.* In my mind's eye, Horatio.

Returning from his reverie, he mentions his character to Horatio, not by a particular detail, but in a summary manner, as if it were the result of a preceding enumeration. Horatio, astonished at his abstracted aspect and demeanour, and having imagined that he saw the apparition which he had himself beheld, by a natural and easy transition, makes mention of the ghost.

> *Hor.* I saw him once, he was a goodly king.
> *Ham.* He was a man, take him for all in all,
> I shall not look upon his like again.
> *Hor.* My Lord, I think, I saw him yesternight, &c.

The whole of this scene between Hamlet and his friends is masterly and affecting. Hamlet, exceedingly moved, expresses amazement: yet he utters nothing verbose and

extravagant, nor any violent exclamation of wonder. The narration is simple, and the dialogue easy. Though the prince can entertain no doubt of the veracity of his friends, he is not credulous; and he questions them very minutely concerning the circumstances of the prodigy. His inquiries indicate extreme uneasiness, and even suspicion, concerning his father's death: yet he moderates his apprehensions, and will not indulge his suspicion, till, by the testimony of his senses, he is assured of the fact.

I'll watch to-night; perchance, 'twill walk again.

I cannot quit this admirable scene, without remarking the superiority of a natural, simple, and unaffected dialogue, to the vanity of figurative and elaborate diction. It has been of late insinuated, that poetical genius is on the decline, and that, if modern dramatic writers abound in declamation and artificial ornament, instead of the language of nature, it is owing to the languor and sterility of their invention. May not the cause be different? Are we confident, if a genuine

representation of human passions and manners, conveyed in artless unaffected language, were exhibited to us, that we would comply with the admonitions of nature, and applaud as our feelings dictate? Are we confident that the pride of learning and the vanity of possessing critical discernment, do not impose on our better judgment, and that we are not more attentive to the harmony of a period, than to the happy utterance of passion?

Hamlet, in some of the foregoing passages, betrays suspicion. But suspicion is not natural to a humane and ingenuous temper. Is it, therefore, a blemish, or the result of an amiable disposition influenced by a sense of virtue?

It is a property of the imagination, when governed by any passion or opinion, to follow the impulse it has received, and to diminish or aggrandize any object not perfectly known to us, according to the judgment we may have formed of it. Under the influence of fear, men, tainted with superstition, people darkness and the night with spectres, and terrify and torment themselves with

imaginary danger. If we are threatened with any unusual calamity, the nature and extent of which is unknown to us, governed by our terrors, we render its stature gigantic: but, if actuated by an intrepid spirit, we brave and undervalue it: approaching to temerity and overweening confidence, we are apt to lessen it beyond its real size. If a man of plausible manners, dexterous in displaying his genius and understanding, secures your esteem, and an opinion of his being endowed with uncommon abilities, you set no limits to his capacity, and imagining him wiser and more ingenious than he really is, you are almost led to revere him. To explain the cause of these appearances is difficult: yet a conjecture may be hazarded. If we think attentively on any subject, many qualities and properties that may belong to it, or views of the relation it may have to other objects, are often suggested: though of their actual existence we are not assured. Yet, if we cannot negatively affirm that they do not belong to it; on the contrary, if they are agreeable to its nature and circumstances, their spontaneous

appearance in our minds, as connected with it, affords a presumption that they really exist. Our belief, though not absolutely confirmed, is yet swayed by a plausible probability; and what strengthens it still the more, is a reflection on the narrowness of our powers, and the imperfection of our senses. We reason from analogy, and think it impossible that an object should be so completely known to us, as that we can pronounce with certainty that we are intimately acquainted with the whole of its structure; and that qualities agreeing perfectly with its nature do not reside in it, merely because we do not discern them. As we are naturally inclined to action, a state of doubt and suspense is ever accompanied with uneasiness; we bear uncertainty with reluctance; we must be resolved; and if we cannot prove a negative, even a slight probability will influence our belief. Therefore, since corresponding qualities and relations are presented and engage the attention of our judging faculty, we seldom hesitate, but ascribe them immediately to the cause or object of our emotion. If they are urged

upon us in a lively manner, the impression they make will have a corresponding energy; and according to the energy of the impression, will be our eagerness to decide. But the manner in which objects excite attention depends on the strength of the exciting passion; therefore proportioned to the vehemence of the passion will be our proneness to be convinced. It is also manifest, that, if any object is naturally difficult to be apprehended, and is so complex or delicate, as to elude the acuteness of our discernment, or the intenseness of our inquiry, we are more liable to error in cases of this nature, than in those things that we perceive distinctly. Admiring the man of abilities, we cannot define with accuracy the precise boundaries of his genius; our imagination gives him energies additional to those he exhibits; and it is agreeable to our opinion of his endowments, and consonant to our present temper, to believe him more eminent than he really is. We are apt to judge in the same manner of the qualities of the heart. To the man who amazes us by some feat of personal bravery, we ascribe every heroic virtue,

though he may have never displayed them: and we pronounce liberal, generous, and disinterested, the man who surprizes us by some unexpected beneficence. On the same principles, those who excite our indignation by their ungrateful or inhuman conduct, are supposed to have trampled on every moral obligation; and we load them not only with the infamy of the crime they have committed, but with that of the crimes of which we believe them capable. The size and colour, so to express myself, of the imaginary qualities in this manner attributed to any object, will correspond exactly to the violence of the present emotion, or the obstinacy of our opinion. If our sense of virtue is exceedingly delicate, our indignation and abhorrence of vice will be of proportioned vehemence; and, according to their vehemence, will be the atrocity of the indefinite imaginary qualities ascribed to the object of our abhorrence. If those whose conduct we censure or lament were formerly esteemed by us, surprize and sorrow for our disappointment, and indignation at a change so unexpected, will augment the

violence of our emotion, and thus magnify their offences. Hence friendship, changed by neglect or ingratitude into indifference, grows into a hatred, of all others the most virulent and full of rancour. It is not wonderful, therefore, nor inconsistent with amiable and kind affections, that Hamlet, moved by an exquisite sense of virtue and propriety, shocked and astonished at the ingratitude and guilt of Gertrude, whom he had revered and believed incapable of any blemish, should become apprehensive of the total degeneracy of her nature, and harbour suspicions concerning his father's death. To these suspicions, the suddenness of the event, the extraordinary and mysterious circumstances attending it, together with the character of the present king, give abundant colour. Hence, with a heart full of agony, prepared for the evidence, and willing to receive it, he exclaims,

> All is not well—
> I doubt some foul play.

Had Hamlet been more indifferent in his regard to propriety and moral obligation, he

would have entertained less esteem for his father, less aversion at Claudius, and less displeasure at the hasty nuptials of Gertrude: he would have entertained no suspicion, nor have given way to resentment: wholly void of anxiety and vexed by no uneasy reflection, he would have enjoyed the happiness of his exalted station. The observation is painful: it infers, that the union between virtue and happiness, so highly vaunted of by many moralists, is not so independent of external incidents as their theories would represent.

Shakespear was abundantly capable of exhibiting the progress of suspicion in the mind of Hamlet till it was ripened into belief. Yet he proceeds in a different manner, and confirms his apprehensions by a testimony, that, according to the prejudices of the times, could not easily be refuted. In this he acted judiciously: the difficulty was worthy of the interposition. Besides it was an interposition perfectly agreeable to the religious opinions of an unenlightened people, and afforded an opportunity of enriching the drama with a very awful and pathetic incident. The

ghost of Hamlet, even in nations where philosophy flourishes, and in periods the least addicted to superstition, will for ever terrify and appal.

I am thy father's spirit;
Doom'd for a certain time to walk the night,
And, for the day, confin'd to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes, done in my days of nature,
Are burnt and purg'd away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood;
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres;
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine:
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood.—List, list, oh list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love, &c.

The awful horror excited by the foregoing passage, is accomplished by simplicity of expression, and by the * uncertainty of the thing described. The description is indirect; and, by exhibiting a picture of the effects which an actual view of the real object would necessarily produce in the spec-

* Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.

tator, it affects us more strongly than by a positive enumeration of the most dreadful circumstances. The imagination left to our own inventions, overwhelmed with obscurity, travels far into the regions of terror, into the abysses of fiery and unfathomable darkness.

The condition of Hamlet's mind becomes still more curious and interesting. His suspicions are confirmed, and beget resentment. Conceiving designs of punishment, and sensible that he is already suspected by the king, he is thrown into violent perturbation. Afraid at the same time lest his aspect or demeanor should betray him, and aware that his project must be conducted with secrecy, his agitation is such as threatens the overthrow of his reason. He trembles as it were on the brink of madness; and is at times not altogether certain that he acts or speaks according to the dictates of a sound understanding. He partakes of such insanity as may arise in a mind of great sensibility, from excessive agitation of spirit, and much labour of thought; but which naturally subsides when the perturbation ceases. Yet he

must act; and not only so, he must act with prudence. He must even conceal his intentions; and his actual condition suggests a mode of concealment. Knowing that he must appear incoherent and inconsistent, he is not unwilling to have it believed, that his reason is somewhat disarranged; and that the strangeness of his conduct admits of no other explanation.

Swear, as before, never, so help you mercy!
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,
As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on,
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall
(With arms encumber'd thus, or this head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
As, *well, well—we know;*—or, *we could, an if we would;*
Or, *if we list to speak;*—or, *there be, an if their might;*
Or such ambiguous giving out) denote
That you know aught of me.

As it is of signal consequence to him to have the rumour of his madness believed and propagated, he endeavours to render the counterfeit specious. There is nothing that reconciles men more readily to believe in any extraordinary appearance than to have it accounted for. A reason of this kind is often

more plausible and imposing than many forcible arguments, particularly, if the theory or hypothesis be of our own invention. Accordingly, Hamlet, the more easily to deceive the king and his creatures, and to furnish them with an explication of his uncommon deportment, practices his artifice on Ophelia.

Oph. O, my Lord, my Lord, I have been so affrighted!
Pol. With what, in the name of heaven?
Oph. My Lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet—with his doublet all unbrac'd,
No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd,
Ungarter'd, &c.
And with a look so piteous in purport,
As if he had been loosed out of hell,
To speak of horrors; he comes before me.
Pol. Mad for thy love?
Oph. My Lord, I do not know;
But, truly, I do fear it.
Pol. What said he?
Oph. He took me by the wrist, and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And, with his other hand, thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face,
As he would draw it, &c.
Pol. This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property foredoes itself,
And leads the will to desperate undertakings, &c.

There is no change in his attachment,

unless in so far as other passions of a violent and unpleasing character have assumed a temporary influence. His affection is permanent. Nor ought the pretended rudeness, and seeming inconsistency of his behaviour, to be at all attributed to inconstancy or an intention to insult. Engaged in a dangerous enterprize, agitated by impetuous emotions, desirous of concealing them, and, for that reason, feigning his understanding disordered; to confirm and publish this report, seemingly so hurtful to his reputation, he would act in direct opposition to his former conduct, and inconsistently with the genuine sentiments and affections of his soul. He would seem frivolous when the occasion required him to be sedate: and, celebrated for the wisdom and propriety of his conduct, he would assume appearances of impropriety. Full of honour and affection, he would seem inconsistent: of elegant and agreeable manners, and possessing a complacent temper, he would put on the semblance of rudeness. To Ophelia he would shew dislike and indifference; because a change of this nature would be, of all others, the most remarkable,

and because his affection for her was passionate and sincere. Of the sincerity and ardour of his regard he gives undoubted evidence.

> I lov'd Ophelia; forty thousand brothers
> Could not, with all their quantity of love,
> Make up my sum.

At any rate, Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia, who however had "repelled his letters, and denied his access to her;" and who was employed as a spy on his conduct; has been greatly exaggerated. The spirit of that remarkable scene in particular, where he tells her, "get thee to a nunnery," is frequently misunderstood, and especially by the players. At least it does not appear to me, that the Poet's intention was, that the air and manner of Hamlet in this scene should be perfectly grave and serious. Nor is there any thing in the dialogue to justify the tragic tone with which it is frequently spoken. Let Hamlet be represented as delivering himself in a light, airy, unconcerned, and thoughtless manner, and the rudeness, so much complained of, will disappear.

The tendency of indignation, and of furious and inflamed resentment, is to inflict punishment on the offender. But, if resentment is ingrafted on the moral faculty, and grows from it, its tenor and conduct will be different. In its first emotion it may breathe excessive and immediate vengeance: but sentiments of justice and propriety interposing, will arrest and suspend its violence. An ingenuous mind, thus agitated by powerful and contending principles, exceedingly tortured and perplexed, will appear hesitating and undetermined. Thus, the vehemence of the vindictive passion will, by delay, suffer abatement; by its own ardour it will be exhausted; and our natural and habituated propensities will resume their influence. These continue in possession of the heart till the mind reposes and recovers vigour: then, if the conviction of injury still remains, and if our resentment seems justified by every amiable principle, by reason and the sentiments of mankind, it will return with power and authority. Should any unintended incident awaken our sensibility, and dispose us to a state of mind fa-

vourable to the influence and operation of ardent and impetuous passions, our resentment will revisit us at that precise period, and turn in its favour, and avail itself of every other sentiment and affection. The mind of Hamlet, weary and exhausted by violent agitation, continues doubtful and undecided, till his sensibility, excited by a theatrical exhibition, restores to their authority his indignation and desire of vengeance. Still, however, his moral principles, the supreme and governing powers of his constitution, conducting those passions which they seem to justify and excite, determine him again to examine his evidence, or endeavour, by additional circumstances, to have it strengthened.

Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit,
That, from her working, all his visage wann'd:
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting,
With forms, to his conceit? and all for nothing?
For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,

That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;
Make mad the guilty, and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze, indeed,
The very faculties of ears and eyes.
Yet I——
—— can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property, and most dear life,
A damn'd defeat was made.—
I have heard,
That guilty creatures sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul, that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions.
I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks;
I'll tent him to the quick; if he do blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen,
May be the devil; and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and, perhaps,
Out of my weakness, and my melancholy,
(As he is very potent with such spirits)
Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
More relative than this.

Resolving to carry his project into execution, he conducts himself with his usual candour and understanding. In an affair

so difficult and so important, he does not confide in his own observations; but, in order to have his judgment rectified, in case of error, and to have his resentment tempered, in case of violence, he imparts his intention to Horatio. Hamlet,

> The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
> The glass of fashion, and the mould of form,

knew the sanctity of friendship, its uses, and its importance. His friend was not merely the partner of his amusements, to be his associate in his pleasures, and to cherish his vanity by adulation: he was a friend to counsel and assist him in doubtful emergencies, to improve his heart, and correct his judgment. The qualities that distinguish Horatio, and render him worthy of the esteem of Hamlet, are not affluence, nor pageantry, nor gay accomplishments, nor vivacity, nor even wit, and uncommon genius, too often allied to an impetuous temper: he is distinguished by that equanimity and independence of soul which arise from governed and corrected passions, from a sound and discerning judgment.

> Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man,
> As e'er my conversation cop'd withal.

Hor. Oh, my dear Lord—
Ham. Nay, do not think I flatter:
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast, but thy good spirits,
To feed and cloath thee?
Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish her election,
She hath seal'd thee for herself: for thou hast been
As one in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
A man, that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks *.
Give me that man,
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.

Hamlet, by means of a dramatic exhibition, into which he had introduced the representation of his father's murder, having assured himself of the guilt of Claudius by his emotions, has no longer any doubt concerning the propriety of his resentment. If we are eagerly interested in any pursuit, whether of an end, or of a mean by which some end may be accomplished, our success is ever attended with joy, even when the end we are pursuing is in itself a foundation of sorrow.

* In quem manca ruit semper fortuna. Hor.

It frequently happens too, if anger or resent ment have taken possession of the soul, and have excited a desire of vengeance; and if there is yet some uncertainty concerning the reality or grossness of the injury we have received, that, till reflection operates, we are better pleased to have our suspicions confirmed and our resentment gratified, than to be convicted of an error, and so be delivered from a painful passion. Hamlet, pleased with the success of his project, though its issue justified his resentment, discovers gaiety, the natural expression and sign of joy.

> Why, let the strucken deer go weep,
> The hart ungalled play;
> For some must watch, while some must sleep;
> So runs the world away.

No scene was ever better imagined than that where Rosincrantz and Guildenstern accost the prince. The creatures of Claudius, and instigated by the queen, they are employed as spies upon Hamlet. He perceives it, and treats them with deserved contempt: in such a manner, however, as to conceal, as much as possible, the real state of his mind. Yet he is teased with their importunity: the

transient gaiety of his humour, as it proceeded from a transient cause, is soon dissipated, and is succeeded by reflections on his condition. His anger and resentment are inflamed; and indignant that the unworthy engines of a vile usurper should be thought capable of insnaring him, he confounds them, by shewing them he had discovered their intentions, and overwhelms them with the supercilious dignity of his displeasure.

Ham. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guil. My Lord, I cannot.

Ham. I pray you.

Guil. Believe me, I cannot.

Ham. I do beseech you.

Guil. I know no touch of it, my Lord.

Ham. 'Tis as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

Guil. But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

Ham. Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me? you would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think that I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe?

The king, alarmed by the consciousness of his guilt, and rendered wary by the suspicions naturally accompanying the dread of punishment, becomes exceedingly apprehensive of the designs of Hamlet. Accordingly, he engages his mother to question him, to sift his soul, and detect him. Rosincrantz and Guildenstern invite him to the conference. They are followed by another engine, who, with all the fawning and self-sufficiency of a courtier, grown grey in adulation and paltry cunning, endeavours, by assentation, to secure his confidence, and so elicit his secret purpose. Hamlet, fretted and exasperated with a treatment so ill-suited to his sentiments and understanding, receives him with contempt; he endeavours to impose on him the belief of his madness, but can hardly bridle his indignation.

> *Pol.* My Lord, the Queen would speak with you, and presently.
>
> *Ham.* Do you see yonder cloud, that's almost in shape of a camel?
>
> *Pol.* By the mass, and it's like a camel, indeed, &c.

The perfidy and guilt of Claudius are now unquestioned. All the circumstances of the

murder are stamped indelibly on the imagination of Hamlet. Yet, though vehemently incensed, the gentle and affectionate principles of his nature preserve their influence, and to the unhappy Gertrude he will not be inhuman. His character, in this particular, is finely distinguished from the Orestes either of Sophocles or of Euripides. His gentleness is far more natural, and renders him more amiable and more estimable*. His violent resentment against his uncle is contrasted in a very striking manner with the warnings of his moral faculty, and the tenderness of his affection.

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When church-yards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft; now to my mother—
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever

* In favour of Orestes, it may, however, be argued, that he was compelled to put Clytemnestra to death by religious motives and the voice of an oracle: Hamlet, on the contrary, was deterred by a similar authority from conceiving vengeance against the Queen, and was warned by the ghost,

Not to contrive against his mother aught.

The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom :
Let me be cruel, not unnatural :
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.

The scene between the Queen and Hamlet has been highly celebrated, and cannot fail, even though less advantageously represented than by a Garrick and a Pritchard, to agitate every audience. The time, 'the 'very witching time of night,' and the state of Hamlet's mind, when 'he could drink 'hot blood, and do such bitter business as 'the day would quake to look on,' prepare us for this important conference. The situation, that of a son endeavouring to reclaim a parent, is exceedingly interesting. All the sentiments and emotions are animated, and expressive of character. In the Queen we discern the confidence of a guilty mind, that, by the artifices of self-deceit, has put to silence the upbraidings of conscience. We discern in her the dexterity with which persons perverted by evil habits abuse their own understandings, and conceal from themselves their blemishes. We also perceive in her the anguish and horror of a mind, appalled and confounded by the con-

sciousness of its depravity, and its eager solicitude to be rescued, by any means, from the persecuting and painful feeling. Hamlet, full of affection, studies to secure her tranquillity; and, guided by moral principles, he endeavours to establish it on the foundation of virtue. Animated by every generous and tender sentiment, and convinced of the superior excellence and dignity of an unblemished conduct, he cannot bear that those who are dear to him should be depraved. It is to gratify this amiable temper that he labours to renew, in the misguided Gertrude, a sense of honour and of merit, to turn her attention, without subterfuge or disguise, on her own behaviour; and to restore her to her former fame. He administers his medicine with reluctance: it is harsh; but the disease is desperate. It is not suitable to the agitated state of his mind to enter sedately into a formal and argumentative discussion of the impiety and immorality of her conduct: he mentions these in a summary manner; and following the impulse of his own mind, he speaks the language of

strong emotion, addresses her feelings, and endeavours to convey into her heart some portion of the indignation with which he is himself inflamed.

> Look here upon this picture, and on this;
> The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
> See, what a grace was seated on his brow:
> Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
> An eye, like Mars, to threaten or command;
> A station, like the Herald Mercury,
> New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
> A combination, and a form, indeed,
> Where every God did seem to set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man:
> This *was* your husband.—Look you now, what follows;
> Here *is* your husband; like a mildew'd ear,
> Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
> Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
> And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?

The contrast in these lines, co-operating with other causes, has a very striking effect. The transition from admiration to abhorrence, in a remarkable degree, heightens the latter. Hamlet dwells minutely on every circumstance of his father's character: but passing from that to the picture of Claudius, his perturbation is visibly augmented; his

indignation and abhorrence are almost too excessive for utterance: and the difference between the two characters appearing to him so manifest as to render a particular illustration needless, he reflects with severity on that woful perversion of mind which has blunted the feelings and perceptions of Gertrude.

> You cannot call it love; for, at your age,
> The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
> And waits upon the judgment; and what judgment
> Would step from this to this?

He convinces her of her guilt; but so fallacious and so imposing are evil habits, that, in spite of her recent conviction, she would yield herself to their suggestions: by supposing her son disordered, she would lessen the authority of his argument, and so relapse. Hamlet, perceiving the workings of her invention, and anxious for her recovery, touches the distempered part of her soul with a delicate and skilful hand: he infuses such golden instruction, and discovers such penetration and knowledge of human nature, as would have dignified a philosopher. He tempers the severity of his admo-

nition with mildness: and assures her, in a pathetic manner, that affection, and zeal for her welfare, are his only motives.

Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass, but my madness, speaks:
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place;
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come:
And do not spread the compost on the weeds
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue:
For, in the fatness of these pursy times,
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and wooe, for leave to do him good.

Q. Oh Hamlet! thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Ham. O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good-night; but go not to mine uncle's bed;
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster custom, who all sense doth eat
Of habits evil, is angel yet in this;
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock, or livery,
That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night;
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence: the next, more easy;
For use can almost change the stamp of nature,
And either curb the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency.

As the contrition of Gertrude, and her consequent good intentions, were the effect of a sudden emotion, its violence no sooner abates, than her former habits resume their influence. She appears irresolute; and Hamlet, full of astonishment and indignation, expresses himself with keenness. He inveighs with acrimony against his uncle: and the Queen, vanquished by his invectives, assures him of her repentance.

On reviewing the analysis now given, a sense of virtue, if I may use the language of an eminent philosopher, without professing myself of his sect, seems to be the ruling principle in the character of Hamlet. In other men, it may appear with the ensigns of high authority: in Hamlet, it possesses absolute power. United with amiable affections, with every graceful accomplishment, and every agreeable quality, it embellishes and exalts them. It rivets his attachments to his friends, when he finds them deserving; it is a source of sorrow, if they appear corrupted. It even sharpens his penetration; and, if unexpectedly he discerns turpitude or impropriety in any character, it

Hamlet, and persons of his constitution, contending with less virtuous opponents, can have little hope of success; and so the poet has not in the catastrophe been guilty of any departure from nature, or any infringement of poetical justice. We love, we almost revere the character of Hamlet; and grieve for his sufferings. But we must at the same time confess, that his weaknesses, amiable weaknesses! are the cause of his disappointments and early death. The instruction to be gathered from this delineation is, that persons formed like Hamlet, should retire, or keep aloof, from situations of difficulty and contention: or endeavour, if they are forced to contend, to brace their minds, and acquire such vigour and determination of spirit as shall arm them against malignity.

ESSAY III.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

ON SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMATIC CHARACTER OF HAMLET,

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

DEAR SIR,

I THANK you for your remarks on my account of Hamlet. Yet I frankly confess that, notwithstanding their ingenuity, I still adhere to my opinion; and, as I am solicitous that you should agree with me, I shall, as briefly as possible, lay my reasons

before you. Nor have I any doubt, but that the same candour which dictated the objections, will procure attention to the reply. Allow me, then, to plead in behalf of Hamlet; and of Shakespeare*, if he need such aid; and of the Public, who, by always interesting themselves in the fate of Hamlet, have, in this most unequivocal manner, as on many other occasions, expressed their approbation of Shakespeare.

* * * * * *

The strongest feature in the mind of Hamlet, as exhibited in the tragedy, is an exquisite sense of moral conduct. He displays, at the same time, great sensibility of temper; and is, therefore, most "tremblingly alive" to every incident or event that befalls him. His affections are ardent, and his attachments lasting. He also displays a strong sense of character; and therefore, a high regard for the opinions of others. His good sense, and excellent dispositions, in the early part of his life, and in the prosperous state of his fortune, rendered him amiable and

* Si tali auxilio.

beloved. No misfortune had hitherto befallen him; and, though he is represented as susceptible of lively feelings, we have no evidence of his having ever shewn any symptoms of a morose or melancholy disposition. On the contrary, the melancholy which throws so much gloom upon him in the course of the play, appears to his former friends and acquaintance altogether unusual and unaccountable.

> ——— Something have you heard
> Of Hamlet's transformation: so I call it;
> Since nor th' exterior, nor the inward man,
> Resembles that it was.

In the conduct, however, which he displays, in the progress of the tragedy, he appears irresolute and indecisive; he accordingly engages in enterprizes in which he fails; he discovers reluctance to perform actions which, we think, needed no hesitation; he proceeds to violent outrage, where the occasion does not seem to justify violence; he appears jocular where his situation is most serious and alarming; he uses subterfuges not consistent with an ingenuous

mind; and expresses sentiments not only immoral, but inhuman.

This charge is heavy; yet every reader, and every audience, have hitherto taken part with Hamlet. They have not only pitied, but esteemed him; and the voice of the people, in poetry as well as politics, deserves some attention. Let us enquire, therefore, whether those particulars which have given such offence, may not be considered as the infirmities of a mind constituted like that of Hamlet, and placed in such trying circumstances, rather than indications of folly, or proofs of inherent guilt. If so, he will still continue the proper object of our compassion, of our regret, and esteem. The award of the public will receive confirmation.

Consider, then, how a young person of good sense, of strong moral feelings, possessing an exquisite sense of character, great sensibility, together with much ardour and constancy of affection, would be apt to conduct himself, in a situation so peculiar as that of Hamlet. He loses a respectable father; nay, he has some reason to suspect, that his father had been treacherously mur-

dered; that his uncle was the perpetrator of the cruel deed; and that his mother, whom he tenderly loved, was an accomplice in the guilt:—he sees her suddenly married to the suspected murderer; he is himself excluded from his birth-right; he is placed in a conspicuous station; the world expects of him that he will resent or avenge his wrongs: while in the mean time he is justly apprehensive of his being surrounded with spies and informers. In these circumstances, and of such a character, if the poet had represented him as acting with steady vigour and unexceptionable propriety, he would have represented not Hamlet, but a creature so fanciful, as to have no prototype in human nature. We are not therefore to expect that his conduct is to proceed according to the most infallible rules of discretion or of propriety. We must look for frailties and imperfections; but for the frailties and imperfections of Hamlet.

I. The injuries he has sustained, the guilt of Claudius, and the perversion of Gertrude, excite his resentment and indignation. Re-

gard for the opinions of others, who expect such resentment in the Prince of Denmark, promotes the passion. He therefore meditates, and resolves on vengeance. But the moment he forms his resolution, the same virtuous sensibility, and the same regard to character, that roused his indignation, suggest objections. He entertains a doubt concerning the ground of his suspicions, and the evidence upon which he proceeds.

> ——— The spirit that I've seen
> May be a devil; and the devil hath power
> T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and, perhaps,
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> (As he is very potent with such spirits,)
> Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
> More relative than this.

In this manner he becomes irresolute and indecisive. Additionally, therefore, to the sorrow and melancholy which he necessarily feels for the situation of his family, and which his peculiar frame of mind renders unusually poignant, the harassment of such an inward struggle aggravates his affliction. His sense of duty, a regard to character, and feelings of just resentment, prompt him to

revenge: the uncertainty of his suspicions, the fallacious nature of the evidence on which he proceeds, and the dread of perpetrating injustice, embarrass and arrest his purpose.

> The time is out of joint—O cursed spight,
> That ever I was born to set it right.

This irresolution, which indeed blasts his designs, but does not lessen our regard for his character, nor our compassion for his misfortunes, and the misery with which it afflicts him, are pathetically described and expressed, in the famous soliloquy consequent to the representation of the Players.

> What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
> That he should weep for her? What would he do,
> Had he the motive and the cue for passion
> That I have? &c.—Yet I, &c.

II. In that particular mood, when he sees his own wrongs and the guilt of Claudius in a striking light, his resentment is inflamed, the evidence seems convincing, and he acts with a violence and precipitation very dissimilar to, though not inconsistent with, his

native temper. In these circumstances, or at a time when he tells us he

> ——— Could drink hot blood!
> And do such bitter business as the day
> Would quake to look on!

in such a situation and state of mind he slew Polonius: he mistook him for the king; and so acted with a violence and precipitation of which he afterwards expresses his repentance. In a similar situation, when he had no leisure nor inclination to weigh and examine appearances, he wrote the death-warrant of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

> Being thus benetted round with villanies,
> Or I could make a prologue to my brains,
> They had begun the play: I sat me down,
> Devis'd a new commission, &c.
> An earnest conjuration from the king,
> As England was his faithful tributary,——
> That on the view and knowing of these contents,
> He should the bearers put to sudden death.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had been employed as spies upon Hamlet: under the disguise of friendship for him, they had accepted of this infamous office; they were in some measure accessary to his intended

assassination: "they made love to this em-
"ployment;" and therefore, as "the defeat
"grew from their own insinuation," there was
no occasion why it "should sit near to Ham-
"let's conscience." If leisure had been given
him to reflect, perhaps he would not have
sacrificed them; but having done the deed,
he does not charge himself with deliberate
guilt. He does not contend that his conduct
was entirely blameless; he only tells us,

They are not *near* my conscience.

III. Thus agitated by external circumstances, torn by contending emotions, liable to the weaknesses nearly allied to extreme sensibility, and exhausted by the contests of violent passions, is it wonderful that he should exhibit dejection of mind, and express disrelish for every human enjoyment? This extreme is no less consistent with his character than his temporary violence. "I
"have of late," he tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "lost all my mirth; forgone
"all custom of exercises; and, indeed, it goes
"so heavily with my disposition, that this
"goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a ste-

"rile promontory; this most excellent cano-
"py, the air, look you, this brave o'er-hang-
"ing firmament; this majestical roof fretted
"with golden fire; why, it appears no other
"thing to me than a foul and pestilent con-
"gregation of vapours," &c. In like manner, the same state of internal contest leads him to a conduct directly opposite to that of violence or precipitancy; and when we expect that he will give full vent to his resentment, he hesitates and recedes. This is particularly illustrated in the very difficult scene where Hamlet, seeing Claudius kneeling and employed in devotion, utters the following soliloquy:

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;
And now I'll do it:—and so he goes to heaven;
And so am I reveng'd? That would be scann'd:
A villain kills my father, and for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
He took my father grossly, full of bread,
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;
And, how his audit stands, who knows, save heaven?
But, in our circumstance and course of thought,
'Tis heavy with him: and am I then reveng'd,

To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?

You ask me, why he did not kill the Usurper? And I answer, because he was at that instant irresolute. This irresolution arose from the inherent principles of his constitution, and is to be accounted natural: it arose from virtuous, or at least from amiable sensibility, and therefore cannot be blamed. His sense of justice, or his feelings of tenderness, in a moment when his violent emotions were not excited, overcame his resentment. But you will urge the inconsistency of this account with the inhuman sentiments he expresses:

Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent:
When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage, &c.
Then trip him, &c.

In reply to this difficulty, and it is not inconsiderable, I will venture to affirm, that these are not his real sentiments. There is nothing in the whole character of Hamlet that justifies such savage enormity. We are therefore bound, in justice and candour, to look for some hypothesis that shall reconcile

what he now delivers, with his usual maxims and general deportment. I would ask, then, whether, on many occasions, we do not alledge those considerations as the motives of our conduct, which really are not our motives? Nay, is not this sometimes done almost without our knowledge? Is it not done when we have no intention to deceive others; but when, by the influences of some present passion, we deceive ourselves? The fact is confirmed by experience, if we commune with our own hearts; and by observation, if we look around. When the profligate is accused of enormities, he will have them pass for manly spirit, or love of society; and imposes this opinion not upon others, but on himself. When the miser indulges his love of wealth, he says, and believes, that he follows the maxims of a laudable œconomy. So also, while the censorious and invidious slanderer gratifies his malignity, he boasts, and believes, that he obeys the dictates of justice. Consult Bishop Butler, your favourite, and the favourite of every real inquirer into the principles of human conduct, and you will be satisfied concerning the truth

of the doctrine.—Apply it, then, to the case of Hamlet: sense of supposed duty, and a regard to character, prompt him to slay his uncle; and he is with-held at that particular moment, by the ascendant of a gentle disposition; by the scruples, and perhaps weakness of extreme sensibility. But how can he answer to the world, and to his sense of duty, for missing this opportunity? The real motive cannot be urged. Instead of excusing, it would expose him, he thinks, to censure; perhaps to contempt. He looks about for a motive; and one better suited to the opinions of the multitude, and better calculated to lull resentment, is immediately suggested. He indulges, and shelters himself under the subterfuge. He alledges, as direct causes of his delay, motives that could never influence his conduct; and thus exhibits a most exquisite picture of amiable self-deceit. The lines and colours are, indeed, very fine; and not very obvious to cursory observation. The beauties of Shakespeare, like genuine beauty of every kind, are often veiled; they are not forward nor obtrusive. They do not demand, though they claim attention.

IV. I would now offer some observations concerning Hamlet's counterfeited or real madness; and as they are also intended to justify his moral conduct, let me beg of you to keep still in view, the particular circumstances of his situation, and the peculiar frame of his mind.

Harassed from without, and distracted from within, is it wonderful, if, during his endeavour to conceal his thoughts, he should betray inattention to those around him; incoherence of speech and manner; or break out inadvertently, into expressions of displeasure? Is it wonderful that he should "forego all mirth," become pensive, melancholy, or even morose? Surely, such disorder of mind, in characters like that of Hamlet, though not amounting to actual madness, yet exhibiting reason in extreme perplexity, and even trembling on the brink of madness, is not unusual. Meantime, Hamlet was fully sensible how strange those involuntary improprieties must appear to others: he was conscious he could not suppress them; he knew he was surrounded with spies; and was justly apprehensive, lest his suspicions

or purposes should be discovered. But how are these consequences to be prevented? By counterfeiting an insanity which in part exists. Accordingly, to Ophelia, to Polonius, and others, he displays more extravagance than his real disorder would have occasioned. This particular aspect of the human mind is not unnatural; but is so peculiar and so exquisitely marked, that he alone who delineated the commencing madness, the blended reason and distraction of Lear, has ventured to pourtray its lineaments. That Hamlet really felt some disorder, that he studied concealment, and strove to hide his distraction under appearances of madness, is manifest in the following passage, among others of the same kind, where he discovers much earnestness and emotion, and at the same time, an affectation of sprightliness and unconcern:

Swear by my sword
Never to speak of this that you have heard.
Ghost. Swear by his sword.
Ham. Well said, old mole! can'st work i' the earth so fast?
A worthy pioneer! Once more remove, good friends.
Hor. O day and night, but this is wond'rous strange!

Ham. And therefore, as a stranger, give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.—
But come;——
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy!
Ghost. Swear, &c.
Ham. Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!

If we allow that the poet actually intended to represent Hamlet as feeling some distraction of mind, and was thus led to extravagancies which he affected to render still more extravagant, why, in his apology to Laertes, need we charge him with deviation from truth?

This presence knows, and you must needs have heard,
How I am punish'd with a sore distraction.
What I have done,
That might your nature, honour, and exception,
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.
Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never, Hamlet;
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
And, when he's not himself, does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it.

Hamlet, no doubt, put to death Polonius; but without intention, and in the frenzy of tumultuous emotion. He might therefore

say, both of that action and of the consequent madness of Ophelia,

> Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil,
> Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
> That I have shot my arrow o'er the house,
> And hurt my brother.

Neither is his conduct at the funeral of Ophelia to be construed into any design of insulting Laertes. His behaviour was the effect of violent perturbation; and he says so afterwards, not only to Laertes, but to Horatio:

> ——— I am very sorry, good Horatio,
> That to Laertes I forgot myself, &c.
> But sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
> Into a tow'ring passion.

To this he alludes in his apology:

> If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,
> And, when he's not himself, does wrong Laertes,
> Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it.

The whole of his behaviour at the funeral, shews a mind exceedingly disordered, and thrown into very violent agitation. But

his affection for Ophelia appears sincere; and his regard for Laertes genuine. On recovery from his transport, to which, however, Laertes provoked him, how pathetic is the following expostulation:

> ——— Hear you, Sir,
> What is the reason that you us'd me thus?
> I lov'd you ever.

I have been the more minute in considering those particulars, that not only you, but Commentators of great reputation, have charged Hamlet, in this part of his conduct, with falsehood and inhumanity *.

V. It remains that I should offer a few observations concerning Hamlet's jocularity. You seem to think it strange, that he should affect merriment when his situation is miserable, and when he feels his misery. Alas!

* With high respect and sincere esteem for one of the most enlightened critics, and most useful moral philosophers that ever appeared in England, this and some other remarks in the Essay on the character of Hamlet, are intended, as the attentive reader will perceive, to remove some strong objections urged by Dr. Johnson against both the play and the character.

it is a symptom, too unambiguous, of his affliction. He is so miserable, that he has no relish for any enjoyment; and is even weary of his existence.

> O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew! &c.

Thinking himself incapable of happiness, he thinks he should be quite unconcerned in any human event. This is another aspect of self-deceit: for in truth he is not unconcerned. Yet acting as if it were so, he affects to regard serious, and even important matters, with a careless indifference. He would laugh; but his laughter is not that of mirth. Add to this, that in those moments when he fancies himself indifferent or unconcerned, he endeavours to treat those actions which would naturally excite indignation, with scorn or contempt. This, on several occasions, leads him to assume the appearance of an ironical, but melancholy gaiety. This state of mind is exquisitely delineated in the following passage, where his affected melancholy betrays itself; and his gaiety and indifference, notwithstanding his

endeavours to preserve them, relapse into his usual mood.

> *Hor.* My Lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
> *Ham.* I pray thee do not mock me, fellow student:
> I think it was to see my mother's wedding.
> *Hor.* Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.
> *Ham.* Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral bak'd meats
> Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
> Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven,
> Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio.

If, however, this account of the matter should not seem to you satisfactory, I must refer you to the preceding essay on the character of Hamlet; for I confess that I think the explanation given in that place is altogether sufficient. Hamlet assumes an air of ease, familiarity, and cheerful unconcern; and therefore jests with his friends, not only to conceal his designs, but that he may suit the complexion of his own mind to that of the unconcerned spectator; nor exhibit in his behaviour, any thing strange, improper, or unbecoming.

* * * * * *

From these remarks, I hope you will now agree with me, that Hamlet deserves com-

passion; and that Horatio may say of him, with propriety,

> ——— Good night, sweet Prince;
> And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

The character is consistent. Hamlet is exhibited with good dispositions, and struggling with untoward circumstances. The contest is interesting. As he endeavours to act right, we approve and esteem him. But his original constitution renders him unequal to the contest: he displays the weaknesses and imperfections to which his peculiar character is liable; he is unfortunate; his misfortunes are in some measure occasioned by his weakness; he thus becomes an object not of blame, but of genuine and tender regret.

ESSAY IV.

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE MELANCHOLY JAQUES.

JAQUES, in As YOU LIKE IT, is exhibited to us in extraordinary circumstances, and in a situation very romantic.

> *Lord.* To-day my Lord of Amiens, and myself,
> Did steal behind him, as he lay along
> Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out
> Upon the brook that brawls along this wood:
> To the which place a poor sequester'd stag,
> That from the hunters' aim had ta'n a hurt,
> Did come to languish; and, indeed, my Lord,
> The wretched animal heav'd forth such groans
> That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
> Almost to bursting; and the big round tears
> Cours'd one another down his innocent nose
> In piteous chace: and thus the hairy fool,
> Much marked of the melancholy Jaques,
> Stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook,
> Augmenting it with tears.

Duke. But what said Jaques?
Did he not moralize this spectacle?
Lord. O yes, into a thousand similies.
First, for his weeping in the needless stream;
Poor deer, quoth he, *thou mak'st a testament*
As wordlings do, giving thy sum of more,
To that which had too much. Then, being there alone,
Left and abandoned of his velvet friends;
'Tis right, quoth he; *thus misery doth part*
The flux of company. Anon, a careless herd,
Full of the pasture, jumps along by him,
And never stays to greet him. *Ay*, quoth Jaques,
Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens;
'Tis just the fashion: wherefore do you look
Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?

The most striking character in the mind of Jaques, according to this description, is extreme sensibility. He discovers a heart strongly disposed to compassion, and susceptible of the most tender impressions of friendship: for he who can so feelingly deplore the absence of kindness and humanity, must be capable of relishing the delight annexed to their exercise. But sensibility is the soil where nature has planted social and sweet affections: by sensibility they are cherished, and matured. Social dispositions produce all those amiable and endearing con-

nections that alleviate the sorrows of human life, adorn our nature, and render us happy. Now Jaques, avoiding society, and burying himself in the lonely forest, seems to act inconsistently with his constitution. He possesses sensibility; sensibility begets affection; and affection begets the love of society. But Jaques is unsocial. Can these inconsistent qualities be reconciled? or has Shakespeare exhibited a character of which the parts are incongruous and discordant? In other words, how happens it that a temper disposed to beneficence, and addicted to social enjoyment, becomes solitary and morose? Changes of this kind are not unfrequent: and, if researches into the origin or cause of a distemper can direct us in the discovery of an antidote, or of a remedy, our present inquiry is of importance. Perhaps, the excess and luxuriancy of benevolent dispositions, blighted by unkindness or ingratitude, is the cause that, instead of yielding us fruits of complacency and friendship, they shed bitter drops of misanthropy.

Aversion from society proceeds from dislike to mankind, and from an opinion of the

inefficacy and uncertainty of external pleasure. Let us consider each of these apart: let us trace the progress by which they established themselves in the mind of Jaques, and gave his temper an unnatural colour.

I. The gratification of our social affections supposes friendship and esteem for others; and these dispositions suppose in their object virtues of a corresponding character: for every one values his own opinion, and fancies the person to whom he testifies esteem actually deserves it. If beneficent affections, ardent and undisciplined, predominate in our constitution, and govern our opinions, we enter into life strongly prepossessed in favour of mankind, and endeavour, by a generous and disinterested conduct, to render ourselves worthy of their regard. That spirit of diffusive goodness, which eloquent and benign philosophy recommends, but without success, to men engaged in the commerce of the world, operates uncontrouled. The heart throbs with astonishment and indignation at every act of injustice, and our bowels yearn to relieve the afflicted. Our

beneficence is unlimited: we are free from suspicion: our friendships are eagerly adopted; they are ardent and sincere. This conduct may, for a time, be flattered: our fond imaginations may heighten every trivial act of complacency into a testimony of unfeigned esteem: and thus, deceived by delusive appearances, we become still more credulous and profuse. But the fairy vision will soon vanish: and the novice who vainly trusted to the benevolence of mankind, will suddenly find himself alone and desolate, in the midst of a selfish and deceitful world: like an enchanted traveller, who imagines he is journeying through a region of delight, till he drinks of some bitter fountain, and instantly, instead of flowery fields and meadows, he finds himself destitute and forlorn, amid the horrors of a dreary desart.

It seems an invariable law in the conduct of our passions, that, independent of the object they pursue, they should yield us pleasure, merely by their exercise and operation. It is known by experience, that the pain of disappointed passion is not solely occasioned by our being deprived of some de-

sirable object, but by having the current of the mind opposed; so that the excited passion recoils exasperated upon the heart. The anguish of this situation is strongly expressed by Seneca, "In angusto inclusæ cupidi-"tates fine exitu seipsas strangulant." There can be no doubt, than anger, malice, and all the malevolent and irregular passions, independent of their fatal consequences, leave the mind in a state of anxiety and disorder. One should therefore imagine, that satisfaction would arise from their being repulsed, and that men would felicitate themselves for a recovery so essential to their repose. Reason and self-love may consider it in this view, and our sense of propriety may hinder us from complaining; but the heart is secretly dejected, and the unbidden sigh betrays us. The gloom, however, is soon dispersed. Yet it proves that the mind suffers more when its operations are suddenly suspended, than when it languishes in a state of listless inactivity. Thus, our benevolent affections, considered merely as principles of action, partaking of the same common

nature with other passions and affections, if their tenor be interrupted, occasion pain.

But the peculiar character of these dispositions renders the anguish occasioned by their suspension more exquisitely painful. They are of a soft exhilarating nature; they elevate and enlarge our conceptions, they refine our feelings, they quicken our sensibility, and stimulate our love of pleasure: they diffuse joy and serenity through the soul, and, by a delightful illusion, give every thing around us a smiling aspect. To a mild and benevolent temper, even inanimate objects, the beauties of nature, the skies, the groves, and the fountains, communicate unusual pleasure, and of a quality too refined to be relished by malignant spirits. But, proportioned to the delight annexed to the exercise of social affections, is the pain arising from their suspension.

Social affections confer happiness, not only by the feelings they excite in us, but by procuring us the friendship and esteem of others. Adequate returns of tenderness are

essential to their existence. By disdain and indifference they languish; they render us anxious, and desponding.

Other advantages less immediate, and which concern our fortune and external circumstances, often depend on the benevolence and sincerity of our friends. For, though it be contrary to the rules of prudence, and the maxims of the world, to repose such entire confidence in the virtue of mankind as to render it possible for them to injure or ruin us; yet there are cases of strong necessity that mock reserve; and there are instances of men so unsuspecting, or so improvident, as to allow themselves, by excessive facility, to be over-reached and undone.

The disappointments of social affection may give us uneasiness of another kind: they may offend against the good opinion we are apt to entertain of ourselves; a principle rivetted in our constitution, useful and necessary in itself, but, by disposing us to overweening conceit, liable to be perverted.

Pain and uneasiness give rise to sorrow; and sorrow varies according to the sources

from which it flows: it is either gentle and languishing, or imbittered with rancour and animosity.

When the uneasiness arises from the sudden and untoward suspension of our emotions, or from the disappointment of some ardent affection, it is of a mild and dejected nature. It may dispose us to remonstrate, but not to inveigh. It is modest and unassuming. It even induces us to think indifferently of ourselves, and, by laying the blame on our own unworthiness, to excuse the inattention or disdain of others.

> Perhaps I was void of all thought;
> Perhaps it was plain to foresee,
> That a nymph so complete would be sought
> By a swain more engaging than me.

Sorrow of this tender complexion, leading us to complain, but not to accuse, and finding remonstrances and complaint ineffectual, retires from society, and ponders its woe in secret.

> Ye woods, spread your branches apace,
> To your deepest recesses I fly;
> I would hide with the beasts of the chace,
> I would vanish from every eye.

The state of mind produced by these emotions, is exhibited to us with uncommon tenderness and simplicity by Orlando.

"If I'm foiled, there is but one shamed that was never "gracious: if killed, but one dead that is willing to be so: "I shall do my friends no wrong, for I have none to la- "ment; the world no injury, for in it I have nothing: "only in the world I fill up a place, which may be better "supplied when I have made it empty."

But, when ambition, avarice, or vanity are concerned, our sorrow is acrimonious, and mixed with anger. If, by trusting to the integrity and beneficence of others, our fortune be diminished, or not augmented as we expected; or if we be not advanced and honoured agreeably to our desires, and the idea we had formed of our own desert, we conceive ourselves injured. Injury provokes resentment, and resentment moves us to retaliate. Accordingly, we retaliate: we inveigh against mankind: we accuse them of envy, perfidy, and injustice. We fancy ourselves the apostles or champions of virtue, and go forth to combat and confound her opponents. The celebrated Swift, possess-

ing uncommon abilities, and actuated by ambition, flattered his imagination with hopes of preferment and distinguished honour, was disappointed, and wrote satires on human nature. Many who declaim with solemn sorrow and prolixity against the depravity and degeneracy of mankind, and overcharge the picture of human frailty with shades of the gloomiest tincture, imagine themselves the elected heroes of true religion, while they are merely indulging a splenetic humour.

On comparing the sorrow excited by repulsed and languishing affection, with that arising from the disappointment of selfish appetites, melancholy appears to be the temper produced by the one, misanthropy by the other. Both render us unsocial; but melancholy disposes us to complain, misanthropy to inveigh. The one remonstrates and retires: the other abuses, retires, and still abuses. The one is softened with regret: the other virulent and fierce with rancour. Melancholy is amiable and benevolent, and wishes mankind would reform: misanthropy is malignant, and breathes re-

venge. The one is an object of compassion; the other of pity.

Though melancholy rules the mind of Jaques, he partakes of the leaven of human nature, and, moved by a sense of injury and disappointment,

> Most invectively he pierceth through
> The body of the country, city, court.

Instigated by sentiments of self-respect, if not of pride, he treats the condition of humanity, and the pursuits of mankind, as insignificant and uncertain. His invectives, therefore, are mingled with contempt, and expressed with humour. At the same time, he shows evident symptoms of a benevolent nature: he is interested in the improvement of mankind, and inveighs, not entirely to indulge resentment, but with a desire to correct their depravity.

> *Duke.* What! you look merrily!
> *Jaq.* A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest,
> A motley fool! A miserable world!
> As I do live by food, I met a fool,
> Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun,
> And rail'd on lady Fortune in good terms,
> In good set terms,—and yet a motley fool.

Good morrow fool, quoth I :—*No sir*, quoth he,
Call me not fool, till Heaven hath sent me fortune:
And then he drew a dial from his poke;
And looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says, very wisely, *It is ten o'clock;*
Thus may we see, quoth he, *how the world wags.*
'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine;
And after one hour more, 'twill be eleven;
And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot,
And thereby hangs a tale.——
O noble fool!
A worthy fool!—Motley's the only wear.

Duke. What fool is this?

Jaq. O worthy fool!—One that hath been a courtier;
And says, if ladies be but young, and fair,
They have the gift to know it: and in his brain,
Which is as dry as the remainder bisket
After a voyage, he hath strange places cramm'd
With observation, the which he vents
In mangled forms:—O that I were a fool!
I am ambitious for a motley coat.

Duke. Thou shalt have one.

Jaq. It is my only suit;
Provided, that you weed your better judgments
Of all opinion, that grows rank in them,
That I am wise. I must have liberty
Withal; as large a charter as the wind,
To blow on whom I please; for so fools have:
And they that are most gauled with my folly,
They most must laugh: and why, sir, must they so?
The *why* is plain as way to parish-church, &c.

Invest me in my motley; give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
If they will patiently receive my medicine.

This mixture of melancholy and misanthropy in the character of Jaques, is more agreeable to human nature than the representation of either of the extremes; for a complete misanthrope is as uncommon an object as a man who suffers injury without resentment. Mankind hold a sort of middle rank, and are in general too good for the one, and too bad for the other. As benevolence and sensibility are manifest in the temper of Jaques, we are not offended with his severity. By the oddity of his manner, by the keenness of his remarks, and shrewdness of his observations, while we are instructed, we are also amused. He is precisely what he himself tells us, often wrapped "in a most humorous sadness." His sadness, of a mild and gentle nature, recommends him to our regard; his humour amuses.

A picture of this kind shows us the fertility of Shakespeare's genius, his knowledge

of human nature, and the accuracy of his pencil, much more than if he had represented in striking colours either of the component parts. By running them into one another, and by delineating their shades where they are gradually and almost imperceptiby blended together, the extent and delicacy of his conceptions, and his amazing powers of execution are fully evident. Violent and impetuous passions are obvious; their colours are vivid; their features strongly marked; they may easily be discerned and easily copied. But the sensibility of the soul flows out in a variety of emotions and feelings, whose impulses are less apparent, and whose progress and operation may escape the notice of superficial observers; but whose influence in governing the conduct, and fashioning the tempers of mankind, is more extensive that we are apt to imagine. Many passions and affections of an insinuating, rather than urgent nature, gain an ascendant in the soul by silent and unobserved approaches. Not to be discerned in the gestures or countenance till they have established a peculiar habit or temper,

they are represented to us by those only whom nature has distinguished; and whom, by rendering them exquisitely susceptible of every feeling, she has rendered supremely happy, or miserable beyond the common lot of humanity. To men of this character, endowed with lively imaginations, and a talent of easy expression, the most delicate emotions and affections of the soul submit themselves, suffering them to copy their true appearance, and exhibit them for the profit and pleasure of mankind: like those aerial agents, the sylphs, fairies, and other divinities of the poets, that preside over the seasons, and regulate the progress of vegetation, but which can only be rendered visible by the spells and authority of a skilful magician.

II. That Jaques, on account of disappointments in friendship, should become reserved and censorious, is agreeable to human nature: but is it natural that he should abjure pleasure, and consider the world and every enjoyment of sense as frivolous and inexpedient? Ought he not rather to have

recurred to them for consolation? On the contrary, he expatiates with satisfaction on the insufficiency of human happiness, and on the insignificance of our pursuits.

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exists and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms:—
And then the whining school-boy with his satchel,
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school:—And then, the lover;
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress's eye-brow:—Then, a soldier;
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel;
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth:—And then, the justice,
In fair round belly, with good capon lin'd,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part:—The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon;
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side;
His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound:—Last scene of all,

That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness, and mere oblivion;
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.

That the heart, sorrowful and dejected by the repulse of an ardent passion, is averse from pleasure of every kind, has been often observed. The mind, in a gay and healthful state, receives hope and enjoyment from every object around us. The same objects, if we languish and despond, are regarded with disgust or indifference. "What path "of life would you pursue?" said Poscidippus, morose and out of humour with his condition: "in public you are perplexed "with business and contention: at home, "you are tired with cares: in the country, "you are fatigued with labour: at sea, you "are exposed to danger: in a foreign land, "if rich, you are fearful; if poor, neglect-"ed: have you a wife? expect sorrow: "unmarried? your life is irksome: children "will make you anxious: childless, your "life is lonely: youth is foolish, and grey-"hairs feeble. Upon the whole, the wise "man would chuse either not to have exist-"ed, or to have died the moment of his

"birth." "Chuse any path of life," replies the cheerful Metrodorus: "in the fo-
"rum are profits and wise debates: at home,
"relaxation: in the country, the bounty of
"nature: the sea-faring life is gainful: in a
"foreign land, if wealthy, you are respect-
"ed; if poor, nobody knows it: are you
"married? your house is cheerful: unmar-
"ried? you live without care: children af-
"ford delight: childless, you have no sor-
"row: youth is vigorous, and old-age ve-
"nerable. The wise man, therefore, would
"not chuse but to have existed." Morose and splenetic moments are transient; the soul recovers from them as from a lethargy, exerts her activity, and pursues enjoyment: but, in the temper of Jaques, moroseness is become habitual: he abandons the world, he contemns its pleasures, and buries himself in a cloister. The cause of this excessive severity requires a particular explanation.

Among the various desires and propensities implanted by nature in the constitution of every individual, some one passion, either by original and superior vigour, or by reiterated indulgence, gains an ascendant in the

soul, and subdues every opposing principle; it unites with desires and appetites that are not of an opposite tendency, it bends them to its pleasure, and in their gratifications pursues its own. The man whose governing passion is pride, may also be social and beneficent; he may love his friends, and rejoice in their good fortune; but, even in their company, the desire of impressing them with an idea of his own importance, for ever obtruding itself, produces disgust and aversion. The ruling passion, blended with others, augments their vehemence, and consequently enhances their pleasure: for the pleasure arising from the gratification of any passion, is proportioned to its force. Moreover, the sensations arising from the indulgence of the governing principle will necessarily be combined with those arising from the gratification of other appetites and desires; so intimately combined, that their union is not easily discerned, but by those who are accustomed to reflect on their feelings: yet, by their union, they affect the mind with a stronger impulse than if they were separately excited. Suppose the ruling

passion thwarted, it ceases to operate with success: the force it communicated to other passions is withdrawn; consequently, their vehemence suffers abatement; and, consequently, the pleasure they yield is lessened. By the discomfiture and disappointment of the governing principle, the pleasure arising from its gratification is no longer united with that arising from other active but subordinate principles; and thus, the pleasure resulting from subordinate principles, by the failure and absence of the adventitious pleasure with which it was formerly accompanied, is sensibly diminished. It is, therefore, manifest, that if social and beneficent affections, by gaining a superiority in the constitution, have heightened every other enjoyment, and if their exercise is suspended by disappointment, all the pleasures of sense or of ambition that formerly contributed to our felicity, though in themselves they are still the same; yet, being reft of their better part, of the spirit that enlivened them, they strike the mind so feebly, as only to awaken its attention to the loss it hath sustained; and, instead of affording

comfort, aggravate our misfortune. We estimate their importance, not as they really are, but as they affect us in our present state; we undervalue and despise them.

Qu'en ses plus beaux habits l'Aurore au teint vermeil,
Annonce à l'univers le retour du soleil,
Et, que devant son char, ses legeres suivantes
Ouvrent de l'orient les portes eclatantes;
Depuis que ma bergere a quitté ces beaux lieux,
Le ciel n'a plus ni jour, ni clarté pour mes yeux.

SEGRAIS.

We may also observe, that social and beneficent affections are in their own nature gay and exhilarating; and that, by extending their influence to other active principles which are not opposed to them, they accelerate their motions and augment their vivacity. They animate, and even inflame the inferior appetites; and where reason, and other serious principles are not invested with supreme authority, they expose us to the anarchy of unlawful passions. There are many instances of men betrayed into habits of profligacy and dissipation, by the influence of their social affections. These men, disappointed and chagrined with the

world, and, consequently, with every pleasure, to whose energy the love of society contributed, consider the enjoyments arising from inferior appetites, not as they really are, when governed and guided by reason, but immoderate and pernicious, agreeably to their own experience. Reformed profligates are often very eloquent teachers of abstinence and self-denial. Polemo, converted by Xenocrates from a course of wild extravagance, became eminent in the school of Plato. The wisdom of Solomon was, in like manner, the child of folly. And the melancholy Jaques would not have moralized so profoundly, had he not been, as we are told in the play, a dissipated and sensual libertine.

To the foregoing observations, and to the consistency of Jaques's character, one thing may be objected; he is fond of music. But surely music is an enjoyment of sense; it affords pleasure; it is admitted to every joyous scene, and augments their gaiety. How can this be explained?

Though action seems essential to our happiness, the mind never exerts itself unless

it be actuated by some passion or desire. Thinking appears to be necessary to its existence; for surely that quality is necessary, without which the object cannot be conceived. But the existence of thinking depends upon thoughts or ideas; and, consequently, whether the mind is active or not, ideas are present to the thinking faculty. The motions and laws observed by our thoughts in the impressions they make on us, vary according as the soul may be influenced by various passions. At one time, they move with incredible celerity; they seem to rush upon us in the wildest disorder, and those of the most opposite character and complexion unite in the same assemblage. At other times, they are slow, regular, and uniform. Now, it is obvious, that their rapidity must be occasioned by the eagerness of an impelling passion, and that their wild extravagance proceeds from the energies of various passions operating at once or alternately. Passions, appetites, and desires, are the principles of action, and govern the motions of our thoughts: yet they are themselves dependent: they

depend on our present humour, or state of mind, and on our temporary capacity of receiving pleasure or pain. It is always to obtain some enjoyment, or to avoid some pain or uneasiness, that we indulge the violence of desire, and enter eagerly into the hurry of thoughts and of action. But if we are languid and desponding, if melancholy diffuses itself through the soul, we no longer cherish the gay illusions of hope; no pleasure seems worthy of our attention; we reject consolation, and brood over the images of our distress. In this state of mind, we are animated by no vigorous or lively passion; our thoughts are quickened by no violent impulse: they resemble one another: we frequently return to the same images: our tone of mind continues the same, unless a desire or wish intervenes, that our condition were somehow different; and as this suggests to us a state of circumstances and events very different from what we suffer, our affliction is aggravated by the contrast, and we sink into deeper sorrow. Precisely agreeable to this description, is the character of melancholy music. The sounds,

that is, the objects it conveys to the mind, move slowly; they partake of little variety, or, if they are considerably varied, it is by a contrast that heightens the expression. Slow sounds, gentle zephyrs and murmuring streams, are agreeable to the afflicted lover. And the dreary whistling of the midnight wind through the crevices of a darksome cloister, cherishes the melancholy of the trembling nun, and disposes her to a gloomy and austere devotion. Thus, the desire of Jaques seems perfectly suited to his character; for the music he requires is agreeable to his present temper.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.
Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot;
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remember'd not.

Thus we have endeavoured to illustrate,

how social dispositions, by being excessive, and by suffering painful repulse, may render us unsocial and morose; how

Goodness wounds itself,
And sweet affection proves the spring of woe.

If these reasonings have any foundation in nature, they lead us to some conclusions that deserve attention. To judge concerning the conduct of others, and to indulge observations on the instability of human enjoyments, may assist us in the discipline of our own minds, and in correcting our pride and excessive appetites. But to allow reflections of this kind to become habitual, and to preside in our souls, is to counteract the good intentions of nature. In order, therefore, to anticipate a disposition so very painful to ourselves, and so disagreeable to others, we ought to learn, before we engage in the commerce of the world, what we may expect from society in general, and from every individual*. But if, previous to experience, we are unable to form just judgments of ourselves and others, we must

* Bruyere.

beware of despondency, and of opinions injurious to human nature. Let us ever remember, that all men have peculiar interests to pursue; that every man ought to exert himself vigorously in his own employment; and that, if we are useful and blameless, we shall have the favour of our fellow-citizens. Let us love mankind; but let our affections be duly chastened. Be independent, if possible; but not insensible.

ESSAY V.

ON THE CHARACTER OF IMOGEN.

CROWDED theatres have applauded IMOGEN. There is a pleasing softness and delicacy in this agreeable character, that render it peculiarly interesting. Love is the ruling passion; but it is love ratified by wedlock, gentle, constant, and refined.

The strength and peculiar features of a ruling passion, and the power of other principles to influence its motions and moderate its impetuosity, are principally manifest, when it is rendered violent by fear, hope, grief, and other emotions of a like nature, excited by the concurrence of external circumstances. When love is the governing

passion, these concomitant and secondary emotions are called forth by separation, the apprehension of inconstancy, and the absolute belief of disaffection. On separation, they dispose us to sorrow and regret; on the apprehension of inconstancy, they excite jealousy or solicitude; and the certainty of disaffection begets despondency. These three situations shall direct the order and arrangement of the following discourse.

I. Cymbeline, instigated against his daughter, by the insinuations of her malicious step-dame, and incensed against Posthumus Leonatus, who was secretly married to Imogen, banishes him from his court and kingdom. The lovers are overwhelmed with sorrow; and the princess, informed by Pisanio of the particular circumstances of her husband's departure, expresses herself in the following manner:

I would have broke mine eye-strings; crack'd 'em, but
To look upon him, till the diminution
Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle:
Nay, follow'd him, till he had melted from

The smallness of a gnat to air; and then
Have turn'd mine eye, and wept *.

These lines express the reluctance of the heart to part with the object of its affections, and the efforts of passion struggling with disappointment. That the sentiments they convey are natural, and agreeable to the conduct of the passions, may very easily be illustrated.

The secret wishes and desires of Imogen's heart recalled Leonatus to her remembrance. But though objects suggested by memory may be exceedingly lively, though they entertain the mind with various and unusual

* There is a passage very similar to this in OVID's story of Ceyx and Halcyone.

Sustulit illa
Humentes oculos, stantemque in puppe recurva,
Concussaque manu dantem sibi signa, maritum
Prima videt; redditque notas: Ubi terra recessit
Longius, atque oculi nequeunt cognoscere vultus,
Dum licet, insequitur fugientem lumine pinum.
Hæc quoque, ut haud poterat, spatio submota, videri;
Vela tamen spectat summo fluitantia malo:
Ut nec vela videt, vacuum petit anxia lectum;
Seque toro ponit. Renovat lectusque locusque
Halcyones lacrymas.

images, and are capable of cherishing and inflaming the most vehement passions, yield little enjoyment, compared with actual sensation. The conviction of present existence distinguishes, in an eminent manner, those things that strike immediately on our senses, from the operations of memory, and the illusions of fancy. Fancy may dazzle and amuse: but reflection, and the consciousness of our present situation, are for ever intruding; and the vision vanishes at their approach. In the present instance, however, the figure of Leonatus can hardly be distinguished; and the sensation received by Imogen is imperfect, and consequently painful. This leads us to a second observation. A thought never fluctuates in the mind solitary and independent, but is connected with an assemblage, formed of thoughts depending upon one another. In every group or assemblage, some objects are preeminent, and some subordinate. The principal figure makes the strongest impression; and the rest are only attended to, on account of their relation to the leading image. The mention of sun-rising, not only sug-

gests a luminous body ascending the eastern sky, but the view also of party-coloured clouds, meadows spangled with dew, and mists hovering on the mountains. Writers, whose works are addressed to the imagination, studying to imitate the various appearances of nature, and, at the same time, sensible that a complete enumeration of every circumstance and quality of an object would be no less tiresome than impossible, are diligent to select those leading circumstances to which the greatest number of inferior particulars may be said to adhere. The choice of circumstances, and skill in their arrangement, are, according to Longinus, the principles of true description. Now, we observed above, that the reality of an object enhances the pleasure of the perception; and therefore that the perceptions we receive by the senses are preferred to representations merely fancied. But suppose we receive a single perception from an object exceedingly interesting; this single, and even imperfect perception, makes a lively impression, and becomes the leading circumstance of an assemblage. Though all

the subordinate and adventitious images are the mere coinage of fancy; yet, on account of their intimate union with the primary object, they operate on the mind as if their archetype really existed. They receive the stamp of reality from the primary perception upon which they depend; they are deemed legitimate, and are preferred to the mere illusions of fancy. In this manner, the distant, and even imperfect view of Leonatus suggests a train of objects more agreeable than a mere imaginary picture: and it is not till this transient consolation is removed, that Imogen would have "turned her eye and wept."

The propriety of the following sentiments depends on the same principles with the former; for the belief that Leonatus, at certain fixed periods, was employed in discharging the tender offices of affection, would give the ideal the authority of actual perception, and its concomitant images would be cherished with romantic fondness.

I did not take my leave of him, but had
Most pretty things to say: ere I could tell him,
How I would think of him at certain hours,

Such thoughts, and such;—or have charg'd him,
At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,
To encounter me with orisons, for then
I am in heaven for him.

But why, says the critic, consume time and attention on actions so frivolous and unimportant? Can they disclose to us any of the arcana of nature? Can they reveal any of her hidden mysteries? Can they explain the wonderful mechanism of the understanding? Or discover the labyrinths of the heart?

To attend to familiar and common objects is not unworthy even of a philosopher. By observing the accidental fall of an apple, Newton explained the motions of the celestial bodies: and a principle illustrated by the easy experiment of bringing two drops of water within their sphere of attraction, has been employed in accounting for the progress of vegetation. The association, we have now endeavoured to explain, accounts for many strange appearances in the history and manners of mankind. It explains that amazing attachment to reliques, which forms an essential part of many modern religions, which fills the convents of Europe with

more fragments of the cross than would cover mount Lebanon, and with more tears of the blessed virgin than would water the Holy Land. These objects confirm particular facts to the zealous votaries, and realize a train of thought suited to enthusiastic ardour. It is not merely the handkerchief stained with the blood of the canonized martyr that moves, shakes, and convulses the pale and pensive nun, who at her midnight orisons, bathes it with her tears: her emotions are occasioned by the belief of particular sufferings enforced on her imagination, by the view of that melancholy object. From the same association we may deduce the passion for pilgrimage, the rage of crusades, and all the consequences of that fatal distemper. Moved by a propensity depending on the same principles, men of ingenuity, enamoured of the Muses, traverse the regions they frequented, explore every hill, and seek their footsteps in every valley. The groves of Mantua, and the cascades of Anio, are not lovelier than other groves and cascades; yet we view them with peculiar rapture. We tread as on consecrated ground;

we regard those objects with veneration which excited invention in the minds of Virgil and Horace; and we seem to enjoy a certain ineffable intercourse with those elegant and enlightened spirits.

Trivial, therefore, as the sentiments and expressions of Imogen may appear, by attending to the principles upon which they depend, they open the mind to the contemplation of extensive objects. Considering them in regard to character, they exhibit to us uncommon affection, sensibility, and mildness of disposition. They are not embittered with invective: she complains of the severity of Cymbeline, but does not accuse: she expresses sorrow, but not resentment: and she reflects on the injustice of the Queen as the cause of her sufferings, rather than the object of her anger. Exceedingly injured, and exceedingly afflicted, she neglects the injury, and dwells on the distress.

> Ere I could
> Give him that parting kiss, which I had set
> Betwixt two charming words, comes in my father;
> And, like the tyrannous breathing of the North,
> Shakes all our buds from growing.——

A father cruel, and a step-dame false;
A foolish suiter to a wedded lady,
That hath her husband banish'd;—O that husband!
My supreme crown of grief! and those repeated
Vexations of it.——
Most miserable
Is the desire that's glorious.

II. We proceed, in the second place, to consider the state of Imogen's mind, labouring with doubts, and pained with the apprehension of a change in the affections of Posthumus.

Nothing, in the structure of the human mind, appears more inexplicable than the seeming inconsistency of passion. Averse from believing the person we love or esteem capable of ingratitude, we are often prone to suspicion, and are alarmed with the slightest symptoms of disaffection. Whoever warns you of the treachery of a professing friend, or of the inconstancy of a smiling mistress, is treated with scorn or resentment: yet, with a scrupulous and critical accuracy, you investigate the meaning of an accidental expression; you employ more sagacity and discernment than might govern a nation,

to weigh the importance of a nod; and a trivial oversight or inattention will cast you into despair. The heart of Imogen, attached to Leonatus by tender and sincere affection, is yet capable of apprehension, and liable to solicitude.

Iachimo, with an intention of betraying her, sensible, at the same time, that infidelity and neglect are the only crimes unpardonable in the sight of a lover, and well aware of the address necessary to infuse suspicion into an ingenuous mind, disguises his inhuman intention with the affectation of a violent and sudden emotion. He seems rapt in admiration of Imogen, and expresses sentiments of deep astonishment:

Ia. What! are men mad? hath nature given them eyes
To see this vaulted arch, and the rich crop
Of sea and land? which can distinguish 'twixt
The fiery orbs above, and the twinn'd stones
Upon the number'd beech? and can we not
Partition make with spectacles so precious
'Twixt fair and foul?

Imo. What makes your admiration?

Ia. It cannot be i' th' eye; for apes and monkeys,
'Twixt two such she's, would chatter this way, and
Contemn with mowes the other: nor i' the judgment;

For idiots, in this case of favour, would
Be wisely definite.—
Imo. What, dear sir,
Thus raps you? are you well?

We never feel any passion or violent emotion without a cause, either real or imagined. We are never conscious of anger, but when we apprehend ourselves injured; and never feel esteem without the conviction of excellence in the object. Sensible, as it were by intuition, of this invariable law in the conduct of our passions, we never see others very violently agitated without a conviction of their having sufficient cause, or that they are themselves convinced of it. If we see a man deeply afflicted, we are persuaded that he has suffered some dreadful calamity, or that he believes it to be so. Upon this principle, which operates instinctively, and almost without being observed, is founded that capital rule in oratorial composition, "That he who "would affect and convince his audience, "ought to have his own mind convinced "and affected." Accordingly, the crafty Italian, availing himself of this propensity,

counterfeits admiration and astonishment: and, Imogen, deceived by the specious artifice, is inclined to believe him. Moved with fearful curiosity, she inquires about Leonatus; receives an answer well calculated to alarm her; and, of consequence, betrays uneasiness.

Imo. Continues well my Lord his health, 'beseech you?
Ia. Well, Madam.
Imo. Is he dispos'd to mirth? I hope he is.
Ia. Exceeding pleasant: none a stranger there
So merry, and so gamesome; he is called
The Britain reveller.
Imo. When he was here,
He did incline to sadness, and oft-times
Not knowing why.

By representing the sentiments of Leonatus as unfavourable to marriage and the fair sex, he endeavours to stimulate her disquietude.

Ia. The jolly Briton cries, O!
Can my sides hold, to think, that man, who knows
By history, report, or his own proof,
What woman is, yea, what she cannot chuse
But must be,—will his free hours languish
For assur'd bondage?
Imo. Will my Lord say so?

Ia. Ay, madam, with his eyes in flood with laughter.—
But heavens know,
Some men are much to blame.
Imo. Not he, I hope.

This expression of hope is an evident symptom of her anxiety. If we are certain of any future good, we are confident and expect: we only hope when the event is doubtful.

Iachimo practises every art; and, by expressing pity for her condition, he makes farther progress in her good opinion. Pity supposes calamity; and the imagination of Imogen, thus irritated and alarmed, conceives no other cause of compassion than the infidelity of Leonatus. The mysterious conduct of Iachimo heightens her uneasiness; for the nature and extent of her misfortune not being precisely ascertained, her apprehensions render it excessive. The reluctance he discovers, and his seeming unwillingness to accuse her husband, are evidences of his being attached to him, and give his surmises credit. Imogen, thus agitated and afflicted, is in no condition to deliberate coolly: and, as her anxiety grows vehement, she be-

comes credulous and unwary. Her sense of propriety however, and the delicacy of her affections, preserve their influence, and she conceals her impatience by indirect inquiries.

Ia. Whilst I am bound to wonder, I am bound
To pity too.
Imo. What do you pity, sir?
Ia. Two creatures, heartily.
Imo. Am I one, sir?
You look on me; what wreck discern you in me
Deserves your pity?
Ia. Lamentable! what!
To hide me from the radient sun, and solace
I' the dungeon by a snuff!
Imo. I pray you, sir,
Deliver with more openness your answers
To my demands. Why do you pity me?

Iachimo's abrupt and impassioned demeanour, his seemingly undoubted friendship for Leonatus, the apparent interest he takes in the concerns of Imogen, and his pretended reluctance to unfold the nature of her misfortune, adding impatience to her anxiety, and thus augmenting the violence of her emotions, destroy every doubt of his sincerity, and dispose her implicitly to be-

lieve him. He, accordingly, proceeds with greater boldness, and, under the appearance of sorrow and indignation, hazards a more direct impeachment. To have bewailed her unhappy fate, and to have accused Leonatus in terms of bitterness and reproach, would have suited the injuries she had received, and the violence of disappointed passion. But Shakespeare, superior to all mankind in the invention of characters, hath fashioned the temper of Imogen with lineaments no less peculiar than lovely. Sentiments amiably refined, and a sense of propriety uncommonly exquisite, suppress the utterance of her sorrow, and restrain her resentment. Knowing that suspicion is allied to weakness, and unwilling to asperse the fame of her husband, she replies with a spirit of meekness and resignation,

> My Lord, I fear,
> Has forgot Britain.

Formerly she expressed hope, when the emotion she felt was fear: here she expresses fear, though fully satisfied of her misfortune.

There is a certain state of mind full of

sorrow, when the approach of evil is manifest and unavoidable. Our reason is then darkened, and the soul, sinking under the apprehension of misery, suffers direful eclipse, and trembles, as at the dissolution of nature. Unable to endure the painful impression, we almost wish for annihilation; and, incapable of averting the threatened danger, we endeavour, though absurdly, to be ignorant of its approach. "Let me hear no more," cries the Princess, convinced of her misfortune, and overwhelmed with anguish.

Iachimo, confident of success, and persuaded that the wrongs of Imogen would naturally excite resentment, urges her to revenge. Skilful to infuse suspicion, he knew not the purity of refined affection. Imogen, shocked and astonished at his infamous offer, is immediately prejudiced against his evidence: her mind recovers vigour by the renovated hope of her husband's constancy, and by indignation against the insidious informer. She therefore vents her displeasure with sudden and unexpected vehemence:—

Imo. What ho, Pisanio!—
Ia. Let me my service tender on your lips.
Imo. Away! I do condemn mine ears, that have
So long attended thee.

This immediate transition from a dejected and desponding tone of mind, to a vigorous and animated exertion, effectuated by the infusion of hope and just indignation, is very natural and striking.

The inquietude of Imogen, softened by affection, and governed by a sense of propriety, exhibits a pattern of the most amiable and exemplary meekness. The emotions she discovers belong to solicitude rather than to jealousy. The features of solicitude are sorrowful and tender: jealousy is fierce, wrathful, and vindictive. Solicitude is the object of compassion mixed with affection; jealousy excites compassion, combined with terror.

III. The same meekness and tender dejection that engage our sympathy in the interests of Imogen, and render even her suspicions amiable, preserve their character

and influence, when she suffers actual calamity. Leonatus, deceived by the calumnies of Iachimo, suffers the pangs of a jealous emotion, and, in the heat of his resentment, commissions Pisanio to take away her life. But the sagacious attendant, convinced of the malignity of the accusation, disobeys his master; and, actuated by compassion, reveals his inhuman purpose. The stroke that inflicts the deepest wound on a virtuous and ingenuous nature, is the accusation of guilt. Those who are incapable of criminal acts and intentions, instigated by a stronger abhorrence of a guilty conduct than others less virtuous than themselves, imagine, if, by any unhappy mischance, they are falsely and maliciously accused, that they are the objects of strong abhorrence. Such minds, very easily affected, and susceptible of every feeling, persecuted by malice, or overwhelmed with infamy and the reproach of mankind, (which they feel more severely than those who have less integrity, and, consequently, a worse opinion of others than they have,) are exposed, for a time, to all the torment of conscious turpitude. The blush of guilty

confusion often inflames the complexion of innocence, and disorders her lovely features. To be rescued from undeserved affliction, Imogen flies for relief to the review of her former conduct; and, surprized at the accusation, and indignant of the charge, she triumphs in conscious virtue.

> False to his bed! what is to be false?
> To lie in watch there, and to think on him?
> To weep 'twixt clock and clock?—if sleep charge nature,
> To break it with a fearful dream of him,
> And cry myself awake? That's false to his bed!

Yet resentment is so natural in cases of heinous injury, that it arises even in minds of the mildest temper. It arises, however, without any excessive or unseemly agitation: its duration is exceedingly transient. It is governed in its utterance by the memory of former friendship: and, if the blame can be transferred to any insidious or sly seducer, who may have prompted the evil we complain of, we wreak upon them the violence of our displeasure.

> I false! thy conscience witness Iachimo—
> Thou didst accuse him of incontinency:

Thou then look'dst like a villain: Now, methinks,
Thy favour's good enough. Some jay of Italy*,
Whose mother was her painting, hath betrayed him.

The resentment of Imogen is of short continuance: it is a sudden solitary flash, extinguished instantly in her sorrow.

Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion.

---

* Commentators have been of different opinions concerning the meaning of this passage. The difficulty however, as it appears to me, may easily be removed, if we attend to some particulars connected with the state of mind of the speaker. Imogen is moved by indignation, and even resentment. These feelings incline her to aggravate obnoxious qualities in the object of her displeasure. The *jay of Italy* is not only very unworthy in herself, but is so by transmitted, hereditary, and therefore by inherent wickedness. She derived it from her parents: *matri turpi filia turpior*: her mother was such as she is; her picture, her portrait; for the word painting, in old English, was used for portrait. Shakespeare himself so uses it:

Laertes, was your father dear to you?
Or, are you like the *painting* of a sorrow,
A face without a heart?

Perhaps, too, the poet uses that sort of figure which, according to rhetoricians, presents as expressing some strong emotion, the consequent in place of the antecedent; or the effect for the cause. So that, instead of saying the jay of Italy was the picture of her mother, Imogen says, more indignantly and more resentfully, that her mother was such

It is not the malice of a crafty step-dame that moves the heart of Imogen to complain; nor the wrath of her incensed and deluded parent; nor that she, bred up in softness, and little accustomed to suffer hardships and sorrow, should wander amid solitary rocks and desarts, exposed to perils, famine, and death: it is, that she is forsaken, betrayed, and persecuted by him, on whose constancy she relied for protection, and to whose tenderness she entrusted her repose. Of other evils she is not insensible; but this is the "supreme crown of her grief." Cruelty and ingratitude are abhorred by the spectator, and resented by the sufferer. But, when the temper of the person injured is peculiarly gentle, and the author of the injury the object of confirmed affection, the mind, after the first emotion, is more apt to languish in despondency than continue inflamed with resentment. The sense of misfortune, rather than the sense of injury, rules the disposition of Imogen, and, in-

---

another, was her very picture. So that she was inherently and hereditarily worthless, aud capable the arts of seduction.

stead of venturing invective, she laments the misery of her condition.

> Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion;
> And, for I am richer than to hang by the walls,
> I must be ript.—To pieces with me!

If a crime is committed by a person with whom we are unconnected, or who has no pretensions to pre-eminent virtue, we feel indignation against the individual; but form no conclusions against the species. The case is different, if we are connected with him by any tender affection, and regard him as of superior merit. Love and friendship, according to the immutable conduct of every passion, lead us to magnify, in our imaginations, the distinguished qualities of those we love. The rest of mankind are ranked in a lower order, and are valued no otherwise than as they resemble this illustrious model. But, perceiving depravity where we expected perfection, mortified and disappointed that appearances of rectitude, believed by us most sincere and unchangeable, were merely specious and exterior, we become suspicious of every pretension to

merit, and regard the rest of mankind, of whose integrity we have had less positive evidence, with cautious and unkind reserve.

True honest men being heard, like false Æneas,
Were, in his time, thought false: and Sinon's weeping
Did scandal many a holy tear; took pity
From most true wretchedness. So thou, Posthumus,
Wilt lay the leaven on all proper men:
Goodly, and gallant, shall be false and perjur'd,
From thy great fail.

Imogen, conscious of her innocence, convinced of Leonatus's perfidy, and overwhelmed with sorrow, becomes careless of life, and offers herself a willing sacrifice to her husband's cruelty.

Be thou honest:
Do thou thy master's bidding: when thou seest him,
A little witness my obedience. Look!
I draw the sword myself: take it, and hit
The innocent mansion of my love, my heart:——
Pr'ythee dispatch:
The lamb intreats the butcher. Where's thy knife?
Thou art too slow to do thy master's bidding,
When I desire it too.

I shall conclude these observations, by explaining more particularly, how the re-

What is the origin of despair?

pulse of a ruling and habituated passion could dispose Imogen to despondency, and render her careless of life: in other words, what is the origin of despair; or, by what lamentable perversion those, who are susceptible of the pleasure of life, and in situations capable of enjoying them, become dissatisfied, and rise from the feast prematurely.

Happiness depends upon the gratification of our desires and passions. The happiness of Titus arose from the indulgence of a beneficent temper: Epaminondas reaped enjoyment from the love of his country: the love of fame was the source of Cæsar's felicity: and the gratification of grovelling appetites gave delight to Vitellius. It has also been observed, that some one passion generally assumes a pre-eminence in the mind, and not only predominates over other appetites and desires, but contends with reason, and is often victorious. In proportion as one passion gains strength, the rest languish and are enfeebled. They are seldom exercised; their gratifications yield transient pleasure; they become of slight

importance, are dispirited, and decay. Thus our happiness is attached to one ruling and ardent passion. But our reasonings, concerning future events, are weak and short-sighted. We form schemes of felicity that can never be realized, and cherish affections that can never be gratified. If, therefore, the disappointed passion has been long encouraged, if the gay visions of hope and imagination have long administered to its violence, if it is confirmed by habit in the temper and constitution, if it has superseded the operations of other active principles, and so enervated their strength, its disappointment will be embittered; and sorrow, prevented by no other passion, will prey, for ever, on the desolate abandoned spirit. We may also observe, that none are more liable to afflictions of this sort, than those to whom nature has given extreme sensibility. Alive to every impression, their feelings are exquisite: they are eager in every pursuit: their imaginations are vigorous, and well adapted to fire them. They live, for a time, in a state of anarchy, exposed to the inroads of every passion; and

though possessed of singular abilities, their conduct will be capricious. Glowing with the warmest affections, open, generous, and candid; yet, prone to inconstancy, they are incapable of lasting friendship. At length, by force of repeated indulgence, some one passion becomes habitual, occupies the heart, seizes the understanding, and, impatient of resistance or controul, weakens or extirpates every opposing principle: disappointment ensues: no passion remains to administer comfort: and the original sensibility which promoted this disposition, will render the mind more susceptible of anguish, and yield it a prey to despondency. We ought, therefore, to beware of limiting our felicity to the gratification of any particular passion. Nature, ever wise and provident, has endowed us with capacities for various pleasures, and has opened to us many fountains of happiness: 'let no tyrannous passion, let 'no rigid doctrine deter thee; drink of the 'streams, be moderate, and grateful.'

ESSAY VI.

ON THE

DRAMATIC CHARACTER OF KING RICHARD III.

THE "Life and Death of King Richard "the Third" is a popular tragedy: yet the poet, in his principal character, has connected deformity of body with every vice that can pollute human nature. Nor are those vices disguised or softened. The hues and lineaments are as dark and as deeply impressed as we are capable of conceiving. Neither do they receive any considerable mitigation from the virtues of any other persons represented in the poem. The vices of Richard are not to serve as a foil

or a test to *their* virtues; for the virtues and innocence of others serve no other purpose than to aggravate his hideous guilt. In reality, we are not much attached by affection, admiration, or esteem, to any character in the tragedy. The merit of Edward, Clarence, and some others, is so undecided, and has such a mixture of weakness, as hinders us from entering deeply into their interest. Richmond is so little seen, his goodness is so general or unfeatured, and the difficulties he has to encounter are so remote from view, are thrown, if I may use the expression, so far into the back ground, and are so much lessened by concurring events, that he cannot, with any propriety, be deemed the hero of the performance. Neither does the pleasure we receive proceed entirely from the gratification of our resentment, or the due display of poetical justice. To be pleased with such a display, it is necessary that we enter deeply into the interest of those that suffer. But so strange is the structure of this tragedy, that we are less interested in the miseries of those that are oppressed, than we are

moved with indignation against the oppressor. The sufferers, no doubt, excite some degree of compassion; but, as we have now observed, they have so little claim to esteem, are so numerous and disunited, that no particular interest of this sort takes hold of us during the whole exhibition. Thus were the pleasure we receive to depend solely on the fulfilment of poetical justice, that half of it would be lost which arises from great regard for the sufferers, and esteem for the hero who performed the exploit. We may also add, that if the punishment of Richard were to constitute our chief enjoyment, that event is put off for too long a period. The poet might have exhibited his cruelties in shorter space, sufficient, however, to excite our resentment; and so might have brought us sooner to the catastrophe, if that alone was to have yielded us pleasure. In truth, the catastrophe of a good tragedy is only the completion of our pleasure, and not the chief cause of it. The fable, and the view which the poet exhibits of human nature, conducted through the whole performance, must produce our enjoyment. But in the

work now before us there is scarcely any fable; and there is no character of eminent importance, but that of Richard. He is the principal agent: and the whole tragedy is an exhibition of guilt, where abhorrence for the criminal is much stronger than our interest in the sufferers, or esteem for those, who, by accident rather than great exertion, promote his downfal. We are pleased, no doubt, with his punishment; but the display of his enormities, and their progress to this completion, are the chief objects of our attention. Thus Shakespeare, in order to render the shocking vices of Richard an amusing spectacle, must have recourse to other expedients than those usually practised in similar situations. Here, then, we are led to enquire into the nature of these resources and expedients: for why do we not turn from the Richard of Shakespeare, as we turn from his Titus Andronicus? Has he invested him with any charm, or secured him by some sacred talisman from disgust and aversion? The subject is curious, and deserves our attention.

We may observe in general, that the

interest is produced, not by veiling or contrasting offensive features and colours, but by so connecting them with agreeable qualities residing in the character itself, that the disagreeable effect is either entirely suppressed, or by its union with coalescing qualities, is converted into a pleasurable feeling*. In particular, though Richard has no sense of justice, nor indeed of any moral obligation, he has an abundant share of those qualities which are termed intellectual. Destitute of virtue, he possesses ability. He shews discernment of character; artful contrivance in forming projects; great address in the management of mankind; fertility of resource; a prudent command of temper; much versatility of deportment; and singular dexterity in concealing his intentions. He possesses along with these, such perfect consciousness of the superior powers of his own understanding above those of other men, as leads him not ostentatiously to treat them with contempt, but to employ them, while he really contemns their weakness, as engines of his

* See Hume's Essay on Tragedy.

ambition. Now, though these properties are not the objects of moral approbation, and may be employed as the instruments of fraud no less than of justice, yet the native and unmingled effect which *most* of them produce on the spectator, independent of the principle that employs them, is an emotion of pleasure. The person possessing them is regarded with deference, with respect, and with admiration. Thus, then, the satisfaction we receive in contemplating the character of Richard, in the various situations in which the poet has shewn him, arises from a mixed feeling: a feeling, compounded of horror, on account of his guilt; and of admiration, on account of his talents. By the concurrence of these two emotions the mind is thrown into a state of unusual agitation; neither painful nor pleasant, in the extremes of pain or of pleasure, but strangely* delightful. Surprize and amazement, excited by the striking conjunctures which he himself very often occasions, and which give exercise to his talents, together with astonishment at the determined bold-

* Lætatur turbidum. Hor.

ness and success of his guilt, give uncommon force to the general impression.

It may be apprehended, that the mixed feelings now mentioned may be termed indignation; nor have I any objection to the use of the term. Indignation seems to arise from a comparative view of two objects: the one worthy, and the other unworthy; which are, nevertheless, united; but which, on account of the wrong or impropriety occasioned by this incongruous union, we conceive should be disunited and independent. The man of merit suffering neglect or contempt, and the unworthy man raised to distinction, provoke indignation. In like manner, indignation may be provoked, by seeing illustrious talents perverted to inhuman and perfidious purposes. Nor is the feeling, for it arises from elevation of soul and consciousness of virtue, by any means disagreeable. Indeed, the pleasure it yields us is different from that arising from other emotions of a more placid and soft character; different, for example, in a very remarkable manner, from our sympathy with successful merit.

We may also observe, that suspence, wonder, and surprise, occasioned by the actual exertion of great abilities, under the guidance of uncontrouled inhumanity, by their awful effects, and the postures they assume, together with solicitude to see an union so unworthy dissolved, give poignancy to our indignation, and annex to it, if I may use the expression, a certain wild and alarming delight.

But, by what term soever we recognise the feeling, I proceed to illustrate, by a particular analysis of some striking scenes in the tragedy, "that the pleasure we receive "from the Character of Richard, is pro-"duced by those emotions which arise in "the mind, on beholding great intellectual "ability employed for inhuman and perfi-"dious purposes."

I. In the first scene of the tragedy, we have the loathsome deformity of Richard displayed with such indications of mind as altogether suppress our aversion. Indeed the poet, in the beginning of Richard's soliloquy, keeps that deformity to which he

would reconcile us, out of view; nor mentions it till he throws discredit upon its opposite: this he does indirectly. He possesses the imagination with dislike at those employments which are the usual concomitants of grace and beauty. The means used for this purpose are suited to the artifice of the design. Richard does not inveigh with grave and with solemn declamation against the sports and pastime of a peaceful Court: they are unworthy of such serious assault. He treats them with irony: he scoffs at them; does not blame, but despise them.

> Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;
> Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;
> Our stern alarums chang'd to merry meetings;
> Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
> Grim-visaged war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front:
> And now, instead of mounting barbed steeds,
> To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
> He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber,
> To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.

By thus throwing discredit on the usual attendants of grace and beauty, he lessens our esteem for those qualities; and proceeds with less reluctance to mention his own hideous appearance. Here, too, with great judgment on the part of the poet, the speech

is ironical. To have justified or apologized for deformity with serious argument, would have been no less ineffectual than a serious charge against beauty. The intention of Shakespeare is not to make us admire the monstrous deformity of Richard, but to make us endure it.

But I, that am not shap'd for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an am'rous looking-glass;
I that am rudely stampt, and want Love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionably,
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them:
Why I (in this weak piping time of peace)
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun,
And descant on mine own deformity:
And, therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain,
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.

His contempt of external appearance, and the easy manner in which he considers his own defects, impress us strongly with the apprehension of his superior understand-

ing. His resolution, too, of not acquiescing tamely in the misfortune of his form, but of making it a motive for him to exert his other abilities, gives us an idea of his possessing great vigour and strength of mind. Not dispirited with his deformity, it moves him to high exertion. Add to this, that our wonder and astonishment are excited at the declaration he makes of an atrocious character; of his total insensibility; and resolution to perpetuate the blackest crimes.

> Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
> By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
> To set my brother Clarence and the king
> In deadly hate, the one against the other:
> And if King Edward be as true and just,
> As I am subtle, false, and treacherous,
> This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up.

It may be said, perhaps, that the colouring here is by far too strong, and that we cannot suppose characters to exist so full of deliberate guilt, as thus to contemplate a criminal conduct without subterfuge, and without imposing upon themselves. It may be thought that even the Neros and the Domitians, who disgraced human nature,

did not consider themselves so atrociously wicked as they really were: but, transported by lawless passions, deceived themselves, and were barbarous without perceiving their guilt. It is difficult to ascertain what the real state of such perverted characters may be; nor is it a pleasing task to analyze their conceptions*. Yet the view which Shakespeare has given us of Richard's sedate and deliberate guilt, knowing that his conduct was really guilty, is not inconsistent. He only gives a deeper shade to the darkness of his character. With his other enormities and defects, he represents him incapable of feeling, though he may perceive the difference between virtue and vice. Moved by unbounded ambition; vain of his intellectual and political talents; conceiving himself, by reason of his deformity, as of a different species from the rest of mankind; and inured from his infancy to the barbarities perpetrated during a desperate civil war; surely it is not incompatible with his character, to represent him incapable of feeling those pleasant or unpleasant sensations that

* Butler.

usually, in other men, accompany the discernment of right and of wrong. I will indeed allow, that the effect would have been as powerful, and the representation would have been better suited to our ideas of human nature, had Richard, both here and in other scenes, given indication of his guilt rather by obscure hints and surmises, than by an open declaration.

II. In the scene between Richard and Lady Anne, the attempt seems as bold, and the situation as difficult, as any in the tragedy.

It seems, indeed, altogether wild and unnatural, that Richard, deformed and hideous as the poet represents him, should offer himself a suitor to the widow of an excellent young prince whom he had slain, at the very time she is attending the funeral of her husband's father, and while she is expressing the most bitter hatred against the author of her misfortune. But, in attending to the progress of the dialogue, we shall find ourselves more interested in the event, and more astonished at the boldness and

ability of Richard, than moved with abhorrence at his shameless effrontery, or offended with the improbability of the situation.

In considering this scene, it is necessary that we keep in view the character of Lady Anne. The outlines of this character are given us in her own conversation; but we see it more completely finished and filled up, indirectly indeed, but not less distinctly, in the conduct of Richard. She is represented by the poet, of a mind altogether frivolous; incapable of deep affection; guided by no steady principles of virtue, produced or strengthened by reason and reflection; the prey of vanity, which is her ruling passion; susceptible of every feeling and emotion; sincere in their expression while they last; but hardly capable of distinguishing the propriety of one more than another; and so exposed alike to the influence of good and of bad impressions. There are such characters: persons of great sensibility, of great sincerity, of no rational or steady virtue, and consequently of no consistency of conduct. They now amaze

us with their amiable virtues; and now confound us with apparent vices.

Richard, in his management of Lady Anne, having in view the accomplishment of his ambitious designs, addresses her with the most perfect knowledge of her character. He knows that her feelings are violent; that they have no foundation in steady determined principles of conduct; that violent feelings are soon exhausted: and that the undecided mind, without choice or sense of propriety, is equally accessible to the next that occur. All that he has to do, then, is to suffer the violence of one emotion to pass away, and then, as skilfully as possible, to bring another, more suited to his designs, into its place. Thus he not only discovers much discernment of human nature, but also great command of temper, and great dexterity of conduct.

In order, as soon as possible, to exhaust her temporary grief and resentment, it is necessary that they be swollen and exasperated to their utmost measure. In truth, it is resentment, rather than grief, which she expresses in her lamentation for Henry.

Accordingly Richard, inflaming her disorder to its fiercest extreme, breaks in abruptly upon the funeral procession. This stimulates her resentment; it becomes more violent, by his appearing altogether cool and unconcerned at her abuse; and thus she vents her emotion in fierce invectives and imprecations:

> O God, which this blood mad'st, revenge his death!
> O earth, which this blood drink'st, revenge his death!
> Or heav'n, with lightning strike the murderer dead!
> Or earth, gape open wide, and eat him quick!

This invective is general. But before the vehemence of this angry mood can be entirely abated, she must bring home to her fancy every aggravating circumstance, and must ascertain every particular wrong she has suffered. When she has done this, and expressed the consequent feelings, she has no longer any topics or food for anger, and the passion will of course subside. Richard, for this purpose, pretends to justify or to extenuate his seeming offences; and thus, instead of concealing his crimes, he overcomes the resentment of Lady Anne,

by bringing his cruelties into view. This has also the effect of impressing her with the belief of his candour.

> Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman,
> Of these supposed crimes, to give me leave,
> By circumstance but to acquit myself, &c.——
> *Anne.* Didst thou not kill this king?
> *Glo.* I grant ye.
> *Anne.* Dost grant me, hedge-hog? then God grant me too,
> Thou may'st be damned for that wicked deed.

Here also we may observe the application of those flatteries and apparent obsequiousness, which, if they cannot take effect at present, otherwise than to give higher provocation; yet, when her wrath subsides, will operate in a different direction, and tend to excite that vanity which is the predominant disposition of her mind, and by means of which he will accomplish his purpose.

It was not alone sufficient to provoke her anger and her resentment to the utmost, in order that they might immediately subside; but by alledging apparent reasons for change of sentiment, to assist them in their decline.

Though Lady Anne possesses no decided, determined virtue, yet her moral nature, uncultivated as it appears, would discern impropriety in her conduct; would suggest scruples, and so produce hesitation. Now, in order to prevent the effect of these, it was necessary to aid the mind in finding subterfuge or excuse, and thus assist her in the pleasing business of imposing upon herself. Her seducer accordingly endeavours to gloss his conduct, and represents himself as less criminal than she at first apprehended.

> To leave this keen encounter of our wits,
> And fall somewhat into a slower method:
> Is not the causer of the timeless deaths
> Of these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward,
> As blameful as the executioner?
> *Anne.* Thou wast the cause, and most accurst effect.
> *Glo.* Your beauty was the cause of that effect:
> Your beauty, which did haunt me in my sleep, &c.

In these lines, besides a confirmation of the foregoing remark, and an illustration of Richard's persevering flattery, there are two circumstances that mark great delicacy and fineness of pencil in Shakespeare's execution of this striking scene. The invective and

resentment are now so mitigated and brought down, that the conversation, assuming the more patient form of dialogue, is not so much the expression of violent passion, as a contest for victory in a smart dispute, and becomes a "keen encounter of wits." The other circumstance to be observed is, that Richard, instead of speaking of her husband and father-in-law, in the relation in which they stood to her, falls in with the subsiding state of her affection towards them, and using terms of great indifference, speaks of "these Plantagenets, Henry and Edward."

Lady Anne having listened to the conversation of Richard, after the first transport of her wrath on the subject of Edward's death, shewed that the real force of the passion was abating; and it seems to be perfectly subdued, by her having listened to his exculpation. In all this the art of the poet is wonderful; and the skill he ascribes to Richard, profound. Though the crafty seducer attempts to justify his conduct to Lady Anne, he does not seek to convince her reason; for she had no reason worth the

pains of convincing, but to afford her some means and opportunity to vent her emotion. When this effect is produced, he proceeds to substitute some regard for himself in its place. As we have already observed, he has been taking measures for this purpose in every thing he has said; and by soothing expressions of adulation during the course of her anger, he was gradually preparing her mind for the more pleasing, but not less powerful, dominion of vanity. In the foregoing lines, and in what follows, he ventures a declaration of the passion he entertains for her. Yet he does this indirectly, as suggested by the tendency of their argument, and as a reason for those parts of his conduct that seem so heinous.

Your beauty was the cause, &c.

Richard was well aware, that a declaration of love from him would of course renew her indignation. He accordingly manages her mind in such a manner as to soften its violence, by mentioning his passion, in the part of the dialogue containing, in his language, the " keen encounter of their

"wits," as a matter not altogether serious; and afterwards, when he announces it more seriously, by mentioning it as it were by chance, and indirectly. Yet, notwithstanding all these precautions to introduce the thought with an easy and familiar appearance, it must excite violent indignation. Here, therefore, as in the former part of the scene, he must have recourse to the same command of temper, and to the same means of artfully irritating her emotion, till it entirely subsides. Accordingly, he adheres without deviation to his plan; he persists in his adulation; provokes her anger to its utmost excess; and finally, by varying the attitudes of his flatteries, by assuming an humble and suppliant address, he subdues and restores her soul to the ruling passion. In the close of the dialogue, the decline of her emotion appears distinctly traced. It follows the same course as the passion she expresses in the beginning of the scene. She is at first violent; becomes more violent; her passion subsides: yet, some notions of propriety wandering across her mind, she makes an effort to recal her resentment.

The effort is feeble; it only enables her to express contempt in her aspect; and at last she becomes the prey of her vanity. In the concluding part of the dialogue, she does not, indeed, directly comply with the suit of Richard, but indicates plainly that total change in her disposition which it was his purpose to produce*.

III. We shall now consider the manner in which Richard manages his accomplices, and those from whom he derives his assistance in the fulfilment of his designs.

We discern in his conduct towards them, as much at least as in their own deportment, the true colour of their characters: we discover the full extent of their faculties, and the real value of their virtues. According as they are variously constituted, his treatment of them varies. He uses them all as the tools of his ambition; but assumes an appearance of greater friendship and confidence towards some than towards others.

* These preceding remarks on the character of Lady Anne were first published in the Mirror, No. 66.

He is well acquainted with the engines he would employ: he knows the compass of their powers, and discovers great dexterity in his manner of moving and applying them. To the Mayor and his followers he affects an appearance of uncommon devotion and piety; great zeal for the public welfare; a scrupulous regard for the forms of law and of justice; retirement from the world; aversion to the toils of state; much trust in the good intentions of a magistrate so conspicuous; still more in his understanding; and by means of both, perfect confidence in his power with the people.—Now, in this manner of conducting himself, who is not more struck with the address and ability displayed by Richard, and more moved with curiosity to know their effects, than shocked at his hypocrisy and base deceit? Who does not distinctly, though indirectly, indeed, discern the character of the Mayor? The deportment of Richard is a glass that reflects every limb, every lineament, and every colour, with the most perfect truth and propriety.

What, think you we are Turks or Infidels,

Or that we would, against the form of law,
Proceed thus rashly in the villain's death? &c.——

Alas! why would you heap those cares on me?
I am unfit for state or Majesty, &c.

The behaviour of Richard towards Buckingham is still more striking and peculiar. The situation was more difficult, and his conduct appears more masterly. Yet, as in former instances, the outlines and sketch of Buckingham's character are filled up in the deportment of his seducer.

This accomplice possesses some talents, and considerable discernment of human nature: his passions are ardent; he has little zeal for the public welfare, or the interests of virtue or religion; yet, to a certain degree, he possesses humanity and a sense of duty. He is moved with the love of power and of wealth. He is susceptible, perhaps, of envy against those who arise to such pre-eminence as he thinks might have suited his own talents and condition. Possessing some political abilities, or, at least, possessing that cunning, that power of subtile contrivance, and that habit of activity, which sometimes pass

for political abilities, and which, imposing upon those who possess them, make them fancy themselves endowed with the powers of distinguished statesmen, he values himself for his talents, and is desirous of displaying them. Indeed, this seems to be the most striking feature in his character; and the desire of exhibiting his skill and dexterity, appears to be the foremost of his active principles. Such a person is Buckingham; and the conduct of Richard is perfectly consonant. Having too much penetration, or too little regard to the public weal, to be blindfolded or imposed upon like the Mayor, Richard treats him with apparent confidence. Moved, perhaps, with envy against the kindred of the Queen, or the hope of pre-eminence in consequence of their ruin, he concurs in the accomplishment of their destruction, and in assisting the Usurper to attain his unlawful preferment. But above all, excessively vain of his talents, Richard borrows aid from his counsels, and not only uses him as the tool of his designs, but seems to share with him in the glory of their success. Knowing,

too, that his sense of virtue is faint, or of little power, and that the secret exultation and triumph for over-reaching their adversaries, will afford him pleasure sufficient to counterbalance the pain that may arise in his breast from the perpetration of guilt, he makes him, in a certain degree, the confident of his crimes. It is also to be remarked, that Buckingham, stimulated with the hope of reward, and elated still more with vanity in the display of his talents, appears more active than the Usurper himself; more inventive in the contrivance of expedients, and more alert in their execution. There are many such persons, the instruments of designing men: persons of some ability, of less virtue, who derive consequence to themselves, by fancying they are privy to the vices or designs of men whom they respect, and who triumph in the fulfilment of crafty projects. Richard, however, sees the feebleness of Buckingham's mind, and reveals no more of his projects and vices than he reckons expedient for the accomplishment of his purpose: for, as some men, when at variance, so restrain their re-

sentments as to leave room for future reconciliation and friendship, Richard so manages his seeming friendships, as to leave room, without the hazard of material injury to himself, for future hatred and animosity. A rupture of course ensues, and in a manner perfectly compatible with both of their characters. Richard wishes for the death of his brother Edward's children; and that his friend should on this, as on former occasions, partake of the shame or the glory. But here the ambition or envy of Buckingham had no particular concern; nor was there any great ability requisite for the assassination of two helpless infants. Thus his humanity and sense of duty, feeble as they were, when exposed to stronger principles, not altogether extinguished, were left to work uncontrouled; and consequently would suggest hesitation. They might be aided in their operation by the insatiate desire of reward for former services, not gratified according to promise or expectation; and, by the same invidious disposition, transferred from the ruined kindred of the Queen to the successful Usurper. Richard, somewhat

aware that this project was more likely to encounter scruples than any of the former, hints his design with caution: he insinuates it with acknowledgment of obligation; and endeavours to anticipate the alarms of conscience, by suggesting to him, along with this acknowledgement, the recollection of former guilt. Not aware, however, of the force contained in the resisting principles, and apprehending that the mind of his assistant was now as depraved as he desired, he hazards too abruptly the mention of his design. The consequence, in perfect consistency with both their natures, is coldness and irreconcileable hatred.

Rich. Stand all apart.—Cousin of Buckingham—
Buck. My gracious Sovereign!
Rich. Give me thy hand. Thus high, by thy advice
And thy assistance, is King Richard seated:
But shall we wear these glories for a day?
Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them?
Buck. Still live they, and for ever let them last.
Rich. Ah, Buckingham! now do I play the touch,
To try if thou be current gold indeed:
Young Edward lives! think now what I would speak.
Buck. Say on, my loving Lord.
Rich. Why, Buckingham, I say I would be King.
Buck. Why, so you are, my thrice renowned Liege.
Rich. Ha! am I a King?—'Tis so—but Edward lives—

Buck. True, noble Prince.

Rich. O bitter consequence!
That Edward still should live—True, noble Prince—
Cousin, thou wast not wont to be so dull.
Shall I be plain? I wish the bastards dead,
And I would have it suddenly perform'd.
What say'st thou now? Speak suddenly—be brief.

Buck. Your Grace may do your pleasure.

Rich. Tut, tut, thou art all ice; thy kindness freezes:
Say, have I thy consent that they shall die?

Buck. Give me some breath, some little pause, dear Lord,
Before I positively speak in this:
I will resolve your Grace immediately.

Cates. The King is angry; see, he gnaws his lip.

The conduct of Richard to Catesby is different from his deportment towards the Mayor or Buckingham. Regarding him as totally unprincipled, servile, and inhuman, he treats him like the meanest instrument of his guilt. He treats him without respect for his character, without management of his temper, and without the least apprehension that he has any feelings that will shudder at his commands.

IV. We shall now consider the decline of Richard's prosperity, and the effect of his conduct on the fall of his fortunes.

By dissimulation, perfidy, and bloodshed, he paves his way to the throne: by the same base and inhuman means he endeavours to secure his pre-eminence; and has added to the list of his crimes, the assassination of his wife and his nephews. Meanwhile he is laying a snare for himself. Not Richmond, but his own enormous vices, proved the cause of his ruin. The cruelties he perpetrates, excite in the minds of men hatred, indignation, and the desire of revenge. But such is the deluding nature of vice, that of this consequence he is little aware. Men who lose the sense of virtue, transfer their own depravity to the rest of mankind, and believe that others are as little shocked with their crimes as they are themselves. Richard having trampled upon every sentiment of justice, had no conception of the general abhorrence that had arisen against him. He thought resentment might belong to the sufferers, and their immediate adherents; but, having no faith in the existence of a disinterested sense of virtue, he appears to have felt no apprehension lest other persons should be offended with

his injustice, or inclined to punish his inhuman guilt. Add to this, that success administers to his boldness; and that he is daily more and more inured to the practice of violent outrage. Before he obtained the diadem, he proceeded with caution; he endeavoured to impose upon mankind the belief of his sanctified manners; he treated his associates with suitable deference; and seemed as dexterous in his conduct, as he was barbarous in disposition. But caution and dissimulation required an effort; the exertion was laborious; and naturally ceased when imagined to be no longer needful. Thus rendered familiar with perfidious cruelty: flushed with success; more elate with confidence in his own ability, than attentive to the suggestions of his suspicion; and from his incapacity of feeling moral obligation, more ignorant of the general abhorrence he had incurred, than averse to revenge; as he becomes, if possible, more inhuman, he certainly becomes more incautious. This appears in the wanton display of his real character, and of those vices which drew upon him even the curses of a parent.

Dutch. Either thou'lt die by God's just ordinance,
Ere from this war thou turn a conqueror;
Or I with grief and extreme age shall perish,
And never look upon thy face again:
Therefore, take with thee my most heavy curse,
Which in the day of battle tire thee more
Than all the complete armour that thou wear'st.

His incautious behaviour after he has arisen to supreme authority, appears very striking in his conduct to his accomplices. Those whom he formerly seduced, or deceived, or flattered, he treats with indifference or disrespect. He conceives himself no longer in need of their aid: he has no occasion, as he apprehends, to assume disguise. Men of high rank, who shall seem to give him advice or assistance, and so by their influence with the multitude, reconcile them to his crimes, or bear a part of his infamy, cease to be reckoned necessary; and he has employment for none, but the desperate assassin, or implicit menial. All this is illustrated in his treatment of Buckingham. Blinded by his own barbarity, he requires his assistance in the death of his nephews. Buckingham, having less

incitement than formerly to participate in his guilt, hesitates, and seems to refuse. Richard is offended; does not govern his temper as on former occasions; expresses his displeasure; refuses to ratify the promises he had given him; behaves to him, in the refusal, with supercilious insult, and so provokes his resentment.

Buck. My Lord, I claim the gift, my due by promise,
For which your honour and your faith are pawn'd;
Th' Earldom of Hereford, and the moveables,
Which you have promised I shall possess, &c.——

Rich. Thou troublest me: I am not in the vein.
[*Exit.*

Buck. Is it even so?—Repays he my deep service
With such contempt?—Made I him king for this?
O, let me think on Hastings, and be gone
To Brecknock, while my fearful head is on.

Thus the conduct of Richard involves him in danger. The minds of men are alienated from his interests. Those of his former associates, who were in public esteem, are dismissed with indignity, and incensed to resentment. Even such of his adherents as are interested in his fortunes, on their own account, regard him with utter aversion. A stroke aimed at him in his perilous

situation, must prove effectual. He arrives at the brink of ruin, and the slightest impulse will push him down. He resembles the mishapen rock described in a fairy tale. "This astonishing rock," says the whimsical novelist, "was endowed, by infernal sorcery, with the power of impetuous motion. It rolled through a flourishing kingdom; it crushed down its opponents; it laid the land desolate; and was followed by a stream of blood. It arrived unwittingly at an awful precipice; it had no power of returning; for the bloody stream that pursued it was so strong, that it never rolled back. It was pushed from the precipice; was shivered into fragments; and the roar of its downfal arose unto heaven."

The pleasure we receive from the ruin of Richard, though intimately connected with that arising from the various displays of his character, is, nevertheless, different. We are not amazed, as formerly, with his talents and his address, but shocked at his cruelty; our abhorrence is softened, or converted into an agreeable feeling, by the

satisfaction we receive from his punishment. Besides, it is a punishment inflicted, not by the agency of an external cause, but incurred by the natural progress of his vices. We are more gratified in seeing him racked with suspicion before the battle of Bosworth; listening from tent to tent, lest his soldiers should meditate treason; overwhelmed on the eve of the battle with presages of calamity, arising from inauspicious remembrance; and driven, by the dread of danger, to contemplate and be shocked at his own heinous transgressions. We are more affected, and more gratified with these, than with the death he so deservedly suffers. Richard and his conscience had long been strangers. That importunate monitor had been dismissed at a very early period from his service; nor had given him the least interruption in the career of his vices. Yet they were not entirely parted. Conscience was to visit him before he died, and chose for the hour of visitation the eve of his death. She comes introduced by Danger; spreads before him, in hues of infernal impression, the picture of his enormities;

shakes him with deep dismay! pierces his soul with a poisoned arrow; unnerves and forsakes him.

> O coward Conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
> The light burns blue—is it not dead midnight?
> Cold, fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
> What do I fear? myself? There's none else by.—
> Is there a murth'rer here? No:—Yes—I am.—
> My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And ev'ry tongue brings in a several tale,
> And ev'ry tale condemns me for a villain.

Upon the whole, certain objects, whether they actually operate upon our senses, or be presented to the mind by imitation, are disagreeable. Yet many disagreeable objects may be so imitated, by having their deformities veiled, or by having any agreeable qualities they may possess improved or judiciously brought forward, that so far from continuing offensive, they afford us pleasure. Many actions of mankind are in their own nature horrible and disgusting. Mere deceit, mere grovelling appetite, cruelty and meanness, both in the imitation and the original, occasion pain and aversion. Yet these vices may be so repre-

sented by the skill of an ingenious artist, as to afford us pleasure. The most usual method of rendering their representation agreeable is, by setting the characters in whom they predominate in opposition to such characters as are eminent for their opposite virtues. The dissimulation, ingratitude, and inhumanity of Goneril, set in opposition to the native simplicity, the filial affection, and sensibility of Cordelia, though in themselves hateful, become an interesting spectacle. The pleasure we receive is, by having the agreeable feelings and sentiments that virtue excites, improved and rendered exquisite by contrast, by alternate hopes and fears, and even by our subdued and coinciding abhorrence of vice. For the painful feeling, overcome by delightful emotions, loses its direction and peculiar character; but retaining its force, communicates additional energy to the prevailing sensation, and so augments its efficacy. Another more difficult, though no less interesting method of producing the same effect is, when with scarce any attention to opposite virtues in other persons, very aggravated and heinous vices are

blended and united in the same person, with agreeable intellectual qualities. Boldness, command of temper, a spirit of enterprise, united with the intellectual endowments of discernment, penetration, dexterity, and address, give us pleasure. Yet these may be employed as instruments of cruelty and oppression, no less than of justice and humanity. When the representation is such, that the pleasure arising from these qualities is stronger than the painful aversion and abhorrence excited by concomitant vices, the general effect is agreeable. Even the painful emotion, as in the former case, losing its character, but retaining its vigor, imparts additional force to our agreeable feelings. Thus though there is no approbation of the vicious character, we are, nevertheless, pleased with the representation. The soul is overshadowed with an agreeable gloom, and her powers are suspended with delightful horror. The pleasure is varied and increased, when the criminal propensities, gaining strength by indulgence, occasion the neglect of intellectual endowments, and disregard of their assistance; so that by

natural consequence, and without the interposition of uncommon agency from without, the vicious person becoming as incautious as he is wicked, is rendered the prey of his own corruptions: fosters those snakes in his bosom that shall devour his vitals; and suffers the most condign of all punishment, the miseries intailed by guilt.

Shakespeare, in his Richard the Third, has chosen that his principal character should be constructed according to the last of these methods; and this I have endeavoured to illustrate, by considering the manner in which Richard is affected by the consciousness of his own deformity; by considering the dexterity of his conduct in seducing the Lady Anne; by observing his various deportment towards his seeming friends or accomplices; and finally by tracing the progress of his vices to his downfal and utter ruin.

The other excellencies of this tragedy, besides the character of Richard, are, indeed, of an inferior nature, but not unworthy of Shakespeare. The characters of Buckingham, Anne, Hastings, and Queen Margaret,

are executed with lively colouring and striking features; but, excepting Margaret, they are exhibited indirectly; and are more fully known by the conduct of Richard towards them, than by their own demeanour. They give the sketch and outlines of their own actions; but the picture appears finished in the deportment of Richard. This, however, of itself, is a proof of very singular skill. The conduct of the story is not inferior to that in Shakespeare's other historical tragedies. It exhibits a natural progress of events, terminated by one interesting and complete catastrophe. Many of the episodes have uncommon excellence. Of this kind are, in general, all the speeches of Margaret. Their effect is awful: they coincide with the style of the tragedy; and by wearing the same gloomy complexion, her prophecies and imprecations suit and increase its horror. There was never in any poem a dream superior to that of Clarence. It pleases, like the prophecies of Margaret, by a solemn anticipation of future events, and by its consonance with the general tone of the tragedy. It pleases, by being so simple,

so natural, and so pathetic, that every reader seems to have felt the same or similar horrors; and is inclined to say with Brakenbury,

> No marvel, Lord, that it affrighted you;
> I am afraid, methinks, to hear you tell it.

This tragedy, however, like every work of Shakespeare, has many faults; and, in particular, it seems to have been too hastily written. Some incidents are introduced without any apparent reason, or without apparent necessity. We are not, for instance, sufficiently informed of the motive that prompted Richard to marry the widow of Prince Edward. In other respects, as was observed, this scene possesses very singular merit. The scene towards the close of the tragedy, between the Queen and Richard, when he solicits her consent to marry her daughter Elizabeth, seems no other than a copy of that now mentioned. As such, it is faulty; and still more so, by being executed with less ability. Yet this incident is not liable to the objection made to the former. We see a good, prudential reason, for the mar-

riage of Richard with Elizabeth; but none for his marriage with Lady Anne. We almost wish that the first courtship had been omitted, and that the dialogue between Richard and Anne had been suited and appropriated to Richard and the Queen. Neither are we sufficiently informed of the motives that, on some occasions, influenced the conduct of Buckingham. We are not enough prepared for his animosity against the Queen and her kindred; nor can we pronounce, without hazarding conjecture, that it proceeded from envy of their sudden greatness, or from having his vanity flattered by the seeming deference of Richard. Yet these motives seem highly probable. The young Princes bear too great a share in the drama. It would seem the poet intended to interest us very much in their misfortunes. The representation, however, is not agreeable. The Princes have more smartness than simplicity; and we are more affected with Tyrrel's description of their death, than pleased with any thing in their own conversation. Nor does the scene of the ghosts, in the last act, seem equal in exe-

cution to the design of Shakespeare. There is more delightful horror in the speech of Richard awakening from his dream, than in any of the predictions denounced against him. There seems, indeed, some impropriety in representing those spectres as actually appearing, which were only seen in a vision. Besides, Richard might have described them in the succeeding scene, to Ratcliffe, so as to have produced, at least in the perusal of the work, a much stronger effect. The representation of ghosts in this passage, is by no means so affecting, nor so awful, as the dream related by Clarence. Lastly, there is in this performance too much deviation in the dialogue from the dignity of the buskin; and deviations still more blameable, from the language of decent manners. Yet, with these imperfections, this tragedy is a striking monument of human genius; and the success of the poet, in delineating the character of Richard, has been as great as the singular boldness of the design.

ESSAY VII.

ON THE

DRAMATIC CHARACTER OF SIR JOHN FALSTAFF.

MY intention in the following Essay, is to explain and account for the pleasure we receive from the representation of Shakespeare's dramatic character of Sir John Falstaff. In treating this subject, I shall with as much brevity as possible mention the cause in which our pleasure depends; and then by a particular analysis of the character, endeavour to establish my theory.

PART I.

No external object affects us in a more disagreeable manner, than the view of suffering occasioned by cruelty; our uneasiness

arises not only from the display of calamity, but from the display of an inhuman mind. For how much soever human nature may exhibit interesting appearances, there are dispositions in mankind, which cannot otherwise be regarded than with abhorrence. Of this sort are cruelty, malice, and revenge. They affect us in the representation in the same manner as in real life. Neither the poet nor historian, if they represent them unmixed and unconnected with other ingredients, can ever render them agreeable. Who can without pain peruse the tragedy of Titus Andronicus, or the account given by Suetonius, of the butcheries and enormities perpetrated by some of the Cæsars?

Yet with cruelty, malice, and revenge, many useful and even excellent qualities may be blended; of this kind are courage, independence of spirit, discernment of character, sagacity in the contrivance, and dexterity in the execution, of arduous enterprises. These considered apart, and unconnected with moral or immoral affections,

are viewed with considerable pleasure, and regarded with some respect. United with good dispositions, they produce the highest merit, and form the most exalted character. United with evil affections, though they do not lessen, yet perhaps they counteract, at least they alter the nature and tendency of our abhorrence. We do not indeed, on their account, regard the inhuman character with less disapprobation; on the contrary, our disapprobation is, if possible, more determined. Yet, by the mixture of different ingredients, our sensations are changed, they are not very painful; nay, if the proportion of respectable qualities be considerable, they become agreeable. The character, though highly blameable, attracts our notice, excites curiosity, and yields delight. The character of Satan in Paradise Lost, one of the most finished in the whole range of epic poetry, fully illustrates our observation: it displays inhumanity, malice, and revenge, united with sagacity, intrepidity, dexterity, and perseverance. Of a similar kind, though with some different lineaments,

is Shakespeare's King Richard the Third; it excites indignation: indignation, however, is not a painful, but rather an agreeable feeling; a feeling too, which, if duly governed, we do not blame ourselves for indulging.

We are led imperceptibly, almost by every bond, even by opposite bonds of association, by those of contrast and resemblance, to extend these remarks. There are qualities in human nature that excite abhorrence; and qualities also that excite disgust. We see some dispositions that are enormously, and some that are meanly shocking. Some give us pain by their atrocity, and some by their baseness. As virtuous actions may be divided into those that are respectable, and those that are amiable; so of vicious actions, some are hateful, and affect us with horror; others are vile, and produce aversion. By one class, we have an imaginary, sympathetic, and transient apprehension of being hurt; by the other, we have a similar apprehension of being polluted. We would chastise the one with painful, and the other with shameful punishment. Of the latter

sort are the gross excesses and perversion of inferior appetites. They hardly bear to be named; and scarcely, by any representation, without judicious circumlocution, and happy adjuncts, can be rendered agreeable. Who can mention, without reluctance, the mere glutton, the mere epicure, and the sot? And to these may be added the coward, the liar, the selfish and assenting parasite.

Yet the constituent parts of such characters may be so blended with other qualities of an agreeable, but neutral kind, as not only to lose their disgustful, but to gain an engaging aspect. They may be united with a complaisance that has no asperity, but that falls in readily, or without apparent constraint, with every opinion or inclination. They may be united with good humour, as opposed to moroseness, and harshness of opposition: with ingenuity and versatility, in the arts of deceit: and with faculties for genuine or even spurious wit; for the spurious requires some ability, and may, to some minds, afford amusement. Add to this, that in fully explaining the appearance, in elucidating how the mixture of different

mental qualities, in the same character, affords delight; we must recollect, as on similar occasions, that when different and even opposite feelings encounter one another, and affect us at the same time; those that prevail under the guidance of some vigorous passion, carry the rest along with them; direct them so as to receive the same tendency with themselves, and impelling the mind in the same manner, receive from their coincidence additional power*. They resemble the swell and progress of a Tartar army. One horde meets with another; they fight; the vanquished unite with the victors: incorporated with them, under the direction of a Timour or a Zingis, they augment their force, and enable them to conquer others.

Characters of the kind above-mentioned, consisting of mean and at the same time of agreeable qualities, though they meet with disapprobation, are yet regarded with some attention: they procure to themselves some attachment; they excite neither fear, envy, nor suspicion: as they are not reckoned

* Hume's Essay on Tragedy.

noxious, the disapprobation they produce is slight; and they yield, or promote amusement. What else are the race of parasites both of ancient and modern times?—the *gnathonici** of different sorts, the direct and indirect, the smooth and the blunt?—those who by assentation, buffoonery, and even wit or some appearance of wit, varied agreeably to the shifting manners of mankind, relieve the fatigue of sloth; fill up the vacuity of minds that must, but cannot think; and are a suitable substitute, when the gorged appetite loathes the banquet, and the downy couch can allure no slumbers?

As persons who display cruel disposition, united with force of mind and superior intellectual abilities, are regarded with indignation; so those whose ruling dèsires aim at the gratification of gross appetite, united with good humour, and such intellectual endowments as may be fitted to gain favour, are regarded with scorn. "Scorn†, like "indignation, seems to arise from a com-"parative view of two objects; the one

* Terence. † Essay on Richard the Third.

" worthy, and the other unworthy, which " are nevertheless united; but which, on " account of the wrong or impropriety oc- " casioned by this incongruous union, we " conceive should be disunited and uncon- " nected." The difference between them seems to be, that the objects of indignation are great and important, those of scorn little and unimportant. Indignation, of consequence, leads us to expressions of anger; but scorn, as it denotes the feeling or discernment of inferiority, with such mixture of pretensions as to produce contrast and incongruity, is often expressed by laughter; and is, in a serious mood, connected with pity. Disdain is akin to indignation, and implies consciousness of inherent worth. You disdain to act an unworthy part:

> Disdain, which sprung from conscious merit, flush'd
> The cheek of Dithyrambus. GLOVER.

Contempt does not so much arise from such consciousness, as from the perception of baseness in the object. To despise, denotes a sentiment between disdain and con-

ality, in a method that is humourous and indirect, and placing him in a ludicrous situation, reconciles us by his exquisite pleasantry to a mean object.

Poins. Falstaff!—fast asleep behind the arras: and snorting like a horse.

P. H. Hark, how hard he fetches breath! Search his pocket. What hast thou found?

Poins. Nothing but papers, my Lord.

P. H. Let's see what they be. Read them.

Poins. Item, a Capon, 2*s.* 2*d.* Item, Sauce, 4*d.* Item, Sack, two gallons, 5*s.* 8*d.* Item, Anchovies and Sack after supper, 2*s.* 6*d.* Item, Bread, a halfpenny.

P. H. O monstrous! but one halfpenny worth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack!

Who but Shakespeare could have made a tavern-bill the subject of so much mirth; and so happily instrumental in the display of character?

The sensuality of the character is also held forth in the humourous and ludicrous views that are given of his person.

Falstaff. The rascal hath removed my horse, and tied him, I know not where. If I travel but four feet by the square further a-foot, I shall break my wind. Eight yards of uneven ground, is threescore and ten miles

a-foot with me: and the stony-hearted villains know it well enough.

P. H. Peace, ye fat-guts! lie down, lay thine ear close to the ground, and list if thou canst hear the tread of travellers.

Falstaff. Have you any levers to lift me up again, being down? S'blood, I'll not bear mine own flesh so far a-foot again for all the coin in thy father's exchequer.

2. Pursuing no other object than the gratification of bodily pleasure, it is not wonderful that in situations of danger, the care of the body should be his chief concern. He avoids situations of danger: he does not wish to be valiant; and without struggle or reluctance, adheres to his resolution. Thus his cowardice seems to be the result of deliberation, rather than the effect of constitution; and is a determined purpose of not exposing to injury or destruction that corporeal structure, foul and unwieldy tho' it be, on which his supreme enjoyment so completely depends. His well known soliloquy on honor displays a mind, that having neither enthusiasm for fame, nor sense of reputation, is influenced in the hour of danger by no principle but the fear of bodily pain:

and if man were a mere sentient and mortal animal, governed by no higher principle than sensual appetite, we might accede to his reasoning:—

> Can honour set a leg? No: or an arm? No: or take away the grief of a wound? No: honour hath no skill in surgery then? No.

Thus while the speaker, in expressing his real sentiments, affects a playful manner, he affords a curious example of self-imposition, of an attempt to disguise conscious demerit, and escape from conscious disapprobation.

3. As persons whose strongest principle is the love of fame, are nevertheless moved by inferior appetites, and seek occasionally their gratification; so the sensualist, constructed originally like the rest of mankind, may be sometimes moved by the desire of praise or distinction. Or, connecting this desire, and the circumstance we have to mention, more intimately with the ruling power, we may suppose that he finds the good-will, and consequently the good opinion, of his associates, requisite or favourable

to his enjoyments, and may wish therefore to gain their regard. The distinction, however, or esteem, to which he aspires, is not for the reality, but the appearance, of merit: about the reality, provided he appear meretorious, he is quite unconcerned.

4. Now this disposition leads to presumption, to boastful affectation and vain-glory.—Falstaff is boastful and vain-glorious. He wishes, on many occasions, and manifestly for selfish purposes, to be reckoned a person of consummate and undaunted courage. He speaks of cowardice with contempt, and affects the firmness of conscious valour:

> A plague of all cowards, I say, and a vengeance too, marry and amen.

He would also pass for a man whose assistance is of consequence, or whose favor deserves to be courted; and in both these attempts he is sometimes, though not always successful. His hostess and Shallow may be imposed upon; but he is better known to Prince Henry.—Consistently with, or in consequence of this vain-glorious disposition, whenever he finds himself respected, and

that he is reckoned a person of some importance, he affects pride, becomes insolent, arrogant, and overbearing. It is in this manner he treats his hostess, Bardolph, and other inferior associates.

P. H. They take it already upon their salvation, that though I be but Prince of Wales, yet I am king of courtesy; and tell me flatly, I am no proud Jack, like Falstaff.

5. Falstaff is also deceitful: for the connection between vain-glorious affectation, and unembarrassed, unreluctant deceit, is natural and intimate. He is deceitful in every form of falsehood. He is a flatterer: he is even hypocritical; and tells the chief justice, that he has "lost his voice singing anthems."

6. Shakespeare intending to display the magic of his skill by rendering a mean character highly interesting, has added to it as many bad qualities as, consistently with one another and with his main design, can be united in one assemblage. He accordingly represents him, not only as a voluptuary, cowardly, vain-glorious, with all the arrogance connected with vain-glory, and de-

ceitful in every shape of deceit; but injurious, incapable of gratitude or of friendship, and vindictive. The chief object of his life being the indulgence of low appetite, he has no regard for right or wrong; and in order to compass his unworthy designs, he practises fraud and injustice. His attachments are mercenary: he speaks disrespectfully of Prince Henry, to whose friendship he is indebted; and values his friendship for convenience rather than from regard. He is also vindictive: but as he expresses his revengeful intention, without any opportunity of displaying it in action, his resentment becomes ridiculous. His menace against the chief Justice, though illiberal and malicious, is not regarded with indignation. One mode of his vengeance is to defame those that offend him by unwarrantable publications. "He will print them," says Page, speaking about some of his ill-intentioned letters, "for he cares not what he puts into "the press."

From the foregoing enumeration, it appears abundantly manifest, that our poet intended to represent Falstaff as very mean

and worthless; but agreeably to an ingenious and peculiar method of unfolding the real character, and which he practices on some other occasions when he would obviate misapprehension, he embraces a good opportunity of making one of the most discerning personages connected with him, give the real delineation. Prince Henry has all along a clear and decided view of Falstaff; and in the admirable scene where the king is personated as reproving his son, he thus describes him:

> Thou art violently carried away from grace: there is a devil haunts thee in the likeness of an old fat man: a tun of man is thy companion. Why dost thou converse with that trunk of humours, &c. that stuff'd cloak-bag of guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly, that reverend vice, that grey inquity, that vanity in years? Wherein is he good, but to taste sack and drink it? Wherein neat and cleanly, but to carve a capon and eat it? Wherein cunning but in craft? Wherein crafty but in villany? Wherein villanous, but in all things? Wherein worthy, but in nothing?

We have here the real moral character; we have an enumeration of disgustful and base qualities, without a single circumstance to palliate or relieve. The speaker enlarges

on his *sensuality* as the leading feature in the character, and the principle on which every thing else in his enumeration depends. How then comes Fatstaff to be a favorite? a favorite with Prince Henry? and a favorite on the English stage? For he not only makes us laugh, but, it must be acknowledged, is regarded with some affection. The answer to these enquiries leads us to our last and chief division: it leads to illustrate the associated and blended qualities which not only reconcile us to the representation, but, by their mixture, give us singular pleasure.

PART III.

Those qualities in the character of Sir John Falstaff which may be accounted estimable are of two different kinds, the social, and intellectual.

I. His social qualities are joviality and good-humour. These dispositions, though they are generally agreeable, and may in

one sense of the word be termed moral, as influencing the manners and deportment of mankind, are not on all occasions, as we shall see exemplified in the present instance, to be accounted virtuous. They may be agreeable without being objects of approbation. Persons who have never given much exercise to their minds, whose powers of intellect and imagination languish through inexertion, can seldom have much enjoyment in being alone. He who cannot think, must fly from himself; and, without having much regard for others, will seek relief in society. But as the bulk of mankind are not very inquisitive about the motives or causes of those actions that do not interest them very much, they are pleased with such appearances of a relish for social intercourse; they are prepossessed in favor of those who court their fellowship, or who in their company discover cheerfulness and complacency.

Falstaff's love of society needs no illustration: and that it is unconnected with friendship or affection is no less apparent. Yet the quality renders him acceptable.—

It receives great additional recommendation from his good-humour. As, amongst those whom he wishes to please, he is not sullen nor reserved; neither is he morose, nor apt to contradict or be offended. Persons of active minds are most liable to such excesses. Whether they engage in the pursuits of fame, fortune, or even of amusement, they form schemes, indulge expectation, are disquieted with solicitude, elated with joy, or vexed with disappointment. The activity of their spirits exposes them to more occasions of discomposure; and their sensibility, natural or acquired, renders them more susceptible of impressions than other men. Hence, without careful discipline or steady resolution, they are apt to become uncomplying, violent, or impetuous. But the mere voluptuary is exposed to no such perversion. He who never engages in serious argument, who maintains no opinion, who contrives no intricate or extensive projects, who is connected with no party, or concerned in no speculation, who has no interest in any thing or any person beyond the gra-

tification of mere appetite, has no object to contend for, nothing that can make him so eager, so tenacious, so obstinate, or unyielding, as persons of a different character. In such men, so slight a desire as that of being acceptable to some particular persons, will, in their company, counterbalance every tendency to fretfulness, insolence, or ill-humour. Such seems to be the good-humour of Falstaff; for our poet discriminates with exquisite judgment, and delineates his conception with power. He does not attribute to Falstaff the good temper flowing from inherent goodness and genuine mildness of disposition; for in company with those about whose good opinion he has little concern, though his vacuity of mind obliges him to have recourse to their company, he is often insolent and overbearing. It is chiefly with Prince Henry, and those whom he wishes, from vanity, or some selfish purpose, to think well of him, that he is most facetious.—The degree or real force of any quality is never so distinctly marked, as when it is put to the test by such trying cir-

cumstances as tend to destroy its existence. Shakespeare seems aware of this; and, in the first scene between the Prince and Falstaff, this part of the character is fully tried and displayed. The Prince attacks Falstaff in a contest of banter and raillery. The Knight for some time defends himself with dexterity and success. But the Prince's jests are more severe than witty; they suggest some harsh truths, and some well founded terrors.

P. H. The fortune of us that are the moon's men, doth ebb and flow like the sea, being governed as the sea is by the moon:——now, in as low an ebb as the foot of the ladder; and, by and by, in as high a flow as the ridge of the gallows.

Such retorts are too serious. The Knight endeavours to reply; but he is overcome; he feels himself vanquished.

Falstaff. S'blood, I am as melancholy as a gib cat, or a lugg'd bear.

But he is not sullen, nor morose. His melancholy, as he terms it, does not appear

in ill-humour, but in a laboured and not very successful attempt to be witty. He is desirous of seeming in good spirits, and embraces the first opportunity given him by the Prince, of recovering them.

Falstaff. S'blood, I am as melancholy as a gib cat, or a lugg'd bear.

P. H. Or an old lion, or a lover's lute.

Falstaff. Yea, or the drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe.

P. H. What sayest thou to a hare, or the melancholy of Moor-ditch?

Falstaff. Thou hast the most unsavory similies, &c. But, Hal, I pray thee, trouble me no more with vanity. I would to God, thou and I knew where a commodity of good names were to be bought, &c. Thou hast done much harm upon me, Hal; God forgive thee for it! Before I knew thee, Hal, I knew nothing: and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked, &c.

P. H. Where shall we take a purse to-morrow, Jack?

Falstaff. Where thou wilt, lad, I'll make one; an' I do not, call me villain, and baffle me.

II. Having shewn that Falstaff possesses as much love of society, and as much good-temper as are consistent with the despicable passions of the sensualist; and which,

though agreeable, are not in him to be accounted virtuous; I proceed to exemplify his intellectual endowments: and of these his talents for wit and humour are the most peculiar.

1. His wit is of various kinds. It is sometimes a play upon words.

Falstaff. I call thee coward! I'll see thee damn'd, ere I call thee coward. But I would give a thousand pounds I could run as fast as thou canst. You are straight enough in the shoulders. You care not who sees your back. Call you that backing of your friends? A plague upon such backing! Give me them that will face me.

It sometimes depends on felicity of allusion.

Falstaff. [*To Bardolph.*] Thou art our admiral, thou bearest the lanthorn in the poop; but 'tis in the nose of thee. Thou art the knight of the burning lamp, &c. I never see thy face, but I think on hell-fire, and Dives that liv'd in purple, &c. O thou art a perpetual triumph, an everlasting bonfire light. When thou ran'st up Gad's-hill, in the night, to catch my horse, if I did not think thou hadst been an ignis fatuus, or a ball of wild-fire, there is no purchase in money.

One of the most agreeable species of wit,

and which Falstaff uses with great success, is the ridiculous comparison. It consists in classing or uniting together, by similitude, objects that excite feelings so opposite as that some may be accounted great, and others little, some noble, and others mean: and this is done, when in their structure, appearance, or effects, they have circumstances of resemblance abundantly obvious when pointed out, though on account of the great difference in their general impression, not usually attended to; but which being selected by the man of witty invention, as bonds of intimate union, enable him, by an unexpected connection, to produce surprise. Of this some of the preceding allusions, which are united with, or involve in them comparisons, are instances: but the following passage affords a more direct illustration.

Falstaff. (speaking of Shallow.) I do remember him at Clement's-inn, like a man made after supper with a cheese-paring. When he was naked, he was for all the world like a forked radish, with a head fantastically carved upon it with a knife.

Another very exquisite species of wit consists in explaining great, serious, or important appearances, by inadequate and trifling causes*. This, if one may say so, is a grave and solemn species; and produces its effect by the affectation of formal and deep research. Falstaff gives the following example:

A good sherris sack hath a two-fold operation: it ascends me into the brain: drives me there all the foolish, and dull, and crudy vapours, which environ it: makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive: full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes: which delivered over to the voice (the tongue) which is the birth, becomes excellent wit.

But Falstaff is not more distinguished for wit than humour: and affords some good illustrations of the difference between them. Wit consists in the thought; and produces its effect, namely laughter, or a tendency to laughter, in whatsoever way, and by whomsoever it may be spoken. Humour again depends on action: it exhibits something done; or something said in a peculiar manner. The action or the thing

* Elements of Criticism.

said may be in themselves indifferent; but derive their power of exciting laughter from the intention and mode of doing or of saying them. Wit is permanent: it remains in the witty saying, by whomsoever it is said, and independent not only of persons, but of circumstances or situation. But in humour the action or saying is ineffectual, unless connected with the character, the intention, manner, or situation, of some speaker or agent. The one seems to depend on connection, invented or displayed unexpectedly, between incongruous and dissonant objects, or parts of objects: the other in the invention or display of such connection between actions and manners incongruous to an occasion. The one presents combinations that may be termed ridiculous; the other such as are ludicrous. The incongruity and dissonance in both cases seem chiefly to respect, not so much the greatness or littleness, as the dignity and meanness, of the connected objects. The amusement is most complete, when the witty thought is expressed with humour. When this is not the case, though we discern

the witty combination, we do not feel its entire effect. Among many others, the first scene between Falstaff and the Chief Justice is highly humorous. It contains no wit in the beginning, which is indeed the most amusing part of the dialogue: and the witticisms introduced in the conclusion, excepting the first or second puns, are neither of a superior kind, nor executed with great success. The Justice comes to reprove Falstaff: and the amusement consists in Falstaff's pretending, first of all, not to see him; and then in pretending deafness, so as neither to understand his message, nor the purport of his conversation.

Ch. Jus. Sir John Falstaff, a word with you.

Falstaff. My good lord! God give your lordship good time of day. I am glad to see your lordship abroad: I heard say your lordship was sick: I hope your lordship goes abroad by advice.——

Ch. Jus. Sir John I sent for you, before your expedition to Shrewsbury.

Falstaff. If it please your lordship, I hear his majesty is returned with some discomfort from Wales.

Ch. Jus. I talk not of his majesty. You would not come when I sent for you.

Fal. And I hear, moreover, his highness is fallen into this same whoreson apoplexy.

Ch. Jus. Well, heaven mend him. I pray, let me speak with you.

Fal. This apoplexy is, as I take it, a kind of lethargy, a'nt please your lordship; a kind of sleeping in the blood; a whoreson tingling.

Ch. Jus. What tell you me of it! be it as it is.

Fal. It hath its original in much grief; from study, and perturbation of the brain, &c.

The Chief Justice becomes at length impatient, and compels Falstaff to hear and give him a direct answer. But the Knight is not without his resources. Driven out of the strong hold of humour, he betakes himself to the weapons of wit.

Ch. Jus. The truth is, Sir John, you live in great infamy.

Fal. He that buckles him in my belt cannot live in less.

Ch. Jus. Your means are very slender, and your waste great.

Fal. I would it were otherwise. I would my means were greater, and my waste slenderer.

Falstaff is not unacquainted with the nature and value of his talents. He em-

ploys them not merely for the sake of merriment, but to promote some design. He wishes, by his drollery in this scene, to cajole the Chief Justice. In one of the following acts, he practises the same artifice with the Prince of Lancaster. He fails, however, in his attempt: and that it was a studied attempt appears from his subsequent reflections.

Good faith, this same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me; nor a man cannot make him laugh.

That his pleasantry, whether witty or humorous, is often studied and premeditated, appears also from other passages.

I will devise matter enough out of this Shallow to keep Prince Henry in continual laughter. O you shall see him laugh, till his face be like a wet cloak ill laid up.

It may also be remarked, that the guise or raiment with which Falstaff invests those different species of wit and humour, is universally the same. It is grave, and even solemn. He would always appear in earnest. He does not laugh himself, unless com-

pelled by a sympathetic emotion with the laughter of others. He may sometimes indeed indulge a smile of seeming contempt or indignation: but it is perhaps on no occasion when he would be witty or humorous. Shakespeare seems to have thought this particular of importance, and has therefore put it out of all doubt by making Falstaff himself inform us:

> O it is much that a lie with a slight oath, and a jest with a *sad brow*, will do with a fellow that never had the ache in his shoulders.

As the wit of Falstaff is various, and finely blended with humour, it is also easy and genuine. It displays no quaint conceits, studied antitheses, or elaborate contrasts. Excepting in two or three instances, we have no far-fetched or unsuccessful puns. Neither has the poet recourse, for ludicrous situation, to frequent and disgusting displays of drunkenness. We have little or no swearing, and less obscenity than from the rudeness of the times, and the condition of some of the other speakers, we might have expected.—Much ridicule is excited by some

of the other characters; but their wit, when they attempt to be witty, is different from that of Falstaff. Prince Henry's wit consists chiefly in banter and raillery. In his satirical allusions he is often more severe than pleasant. The wit of Pistol, if it be intended for wit, is altogether affected, and is of a kind which Falstaff never displays. It is an affectation of pompous language: an attempt at the mock-heroic; and consists in employing inflated diction on common occasions. The speaker does not possess, but aim at wit; and, for want of other resources, endeavours to procure a laugh by odd expressions, and an absurd application of learned and lofty phrases.

> Dost thou thirst, base Trojan,
> To have me fold up Parca's fatal web?

Falstaff's page being only a novice, attempts to be witty after the inflated manner of Pistol: but being supposed to have profited by his master's example, he is more successful, and his pompous phrases have a witty meaning.

Page (to Bardolph). Away, thou rascally Althea's dream! away!

P. H. Instruct us, boy; what dream, boy?

Page. Marry, my lord, Althea dreamed she was delivered of a firebrand; and therefore I call him her dream.

The laughter excited by the rest of Falstaff's associates is not by the wit or humour of the speaker, but by ludicrous situation, ridiculous views of peculiar manners, and the absurd misapplication of language.—Thus in the admirable and instructive account given by the hostess of Falstaff's death:

Nay, sure, he's not in hell: he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom. A' made a finer end, and went away an' it had been any christom child; a' parted even just between twelve and one, e'en at turning o' the tide: for after I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with flowers, and smile upon his finger's ends, I knew there was but one way! for his nose was as sharp as a pen, and a' babbled of green fields. How now, Sir John? quoth I: what, man! be of good cheer: so a' cried out, God, God, God, three or four times. Now I, to comfort him, bid him a' should not think of God; I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet: so a' bade me lay more cloaths on his feet.—I put my hand into the bed, and felt them; and they

were as cold as any stone: then I felt to his knees, and so upward, and upward; and all was as cold as any stone.

2. The other intellectual talents attributed by our poet to Sir John Falstaff, are discernment of character, versatility, and dexterity in the management of mankind; a discernment, however, and a dexterity of a peculiar and limited species; limited to the power of discerning whether or not men may be rendered fit for his purposes; and to the power of managing them as the instruments of his enjoyment.

We may remark his discernment of mankind, and his dexterity in employing them, in his conduct towards the Prince, to Shallow, and his inferior associates.—He flatters the Prince, but he uses such flattery as is intended to impose on a person of understanding. He flatters him indirectly. He seems to treat him with familiarity: he affects to be displeased with him: he rallies him; and contends with him in the field of wit. When he gives praise, it is insinuated; or it seems reluctant, accidental, and ex-

torted by the power of truth. In like manner, when he would impress him with a belief of his affectionate and firm attachment, he proceeds by insinuation; he would have it appear involuntary, the effect of strong irresistible impulse; so strong as to appear preternatural.

If the rascal hath not given me medicines to make me love him, I'll be hang'd.

Yet his aim is not merely to please the Prince: it is to corrupt and govern him; and to make him bend to his purposes, and become the instrument of his pleasures. He makes the attempt: he seizes, what he thinks a good opportunity, by charging him with cowardice at the encounter of Gads-hill: he is desirous of finding him a coward: pushes his attack as far as possible; suffers a sudden repulse: but with great versatility and address retires to his former fastness.

Falstaff. Are you not a coward? answer me that: and Poins there?

P. H. Ye fat paunch, an' ye call me coward, I'll stab thee.

Falstaff. I call thee coward! I'll see thee damned ere I call thee coward. But I would give a thousand pounds I could run as fast as thou canst, &c.

His behaviour to Shallow and Slender is different, because their characters are different. He fathoms them, and steers a corresponding course. He treats them at first with such deference, as he would render to men of sense and condition. He tries whether or no it be possible to allure them by his usual artifice: he is good-humoured, social, and witty. But the wit he tries upon them is of his lowest kind; and he has no occasion for any other. They are delighted, and express admiration.

Falstaff. Is thy name Mouldy?
Mouldy. Yea, an't please you.
Falstaff. It is the more time thou wert used.
Shallow. Ha! ha! ha! most excellent, I'faith: things that are mouldy lack use. Well said, Sir John, very well said.

He thus penetrates into their character, and conducts himself in a suitable manner. He no longer gives himself the trouble of

amusing them. He is no longer witty: he affects the dignity of a great man, and is sparing of his conversation. "I do see the "bottom," says he, "of Justice Shallow." Meanwhile Shallow and Slender become in their turns solicitous of pleasing *him*: they believe him a man of great consequence: they think even of making him *their* dupe, and of employing him as the engine of their petty ambition. He indulges their folly, lets them entangle themselves in the snare; endures their conversation, and does them the signal honour of borrowing a thousand pounds.—His treatment of his hostess and Bardolph is no less dexterous; but from the ascendant he has obtained, it is not so difficult, and is managed by the poet in the most inoffensive manner.

3. Another kind of ability displayed by our hero, is the address with which he defies detection, and extricates himself out of difficulty. He is never at a loss. His presence of mind never forsakes him. Having no sense of character, he is never troubled

with shame. Though frequently detected, or in danger of detection, his inventive faculty never sleeps; it is never totally overwhelmed: or, if it be surprised into a momentary intermission of its power, it forthwith recovers, and supplies him with fresh resources. He is furnished with palliatives and excuses for every emergency. Besides other effects produced by this display of ability, it tends to amuse, and to excite laughter: for we are amused by the application of inadequate and ridiculous causes. Of the talent now mentioned we have many instances. Thus, when detected by Prince Henry in his boastful pretensions to courage, he tells him that he knew him. "Was it for me," says he, "to kill the heir-apparent?" So also in another scene, when he is detected in his abuse of the Prince, and overheard even by the Prince himself.

> No abuse, Ned, in the world; honest Ned, none. I dispraised him before the wicked, that the wicked might not fall in love with him.

In the admirable scene, where he is detected in falsely and injuriously charging his

hostess with having picked his pocket of some very valuable articles, whereas the theft was chiefly of the ludicrous tavern-bill formerly mentioned, his escape is singularly remarkable. He does not justify himself by any plea of innocence. He does not colour nor palliate his offence. He cares not what baseness may be imputed to himself: all that he desires is, that others may not be spotless. If he can make them appear base, so much the better. For how can they blame him, if they themselves are blameable? On the present occasion he has some opportunity: he sees and employs it. The Prince, in rifling his pocket, had descended to an undignified action. The trespass indeed was slight, and Falstaff could not reckon it otherwise. But Prince Henry, possessing the delicacies of honour, felt it with peculiar acuteness. Falstaff, aware of this, employs the Prince's feelings as a counterpart to his own baseness, and is successful. It is on this particular point, tho' not usually attended to, because managed with much address, that his present resource depends.

P. H. Thou sayest true, Hostess, and he slanders thee most grossly.

Host. So doth he you, my lord; and said this other day you ought him a thousand pound.

P. H. Sirrah, do I owe you a thousand pound?

Falstaff. A thousand pound, Hal? a million: thy love is worth a million: thou owest me thy love.

Host. Nay, my lord, he called you Jack, and said he would cudgel you.

Falstaff. Did I, Bardolph?

Bardolph. Indeed, Sir John, you said so.

Falstaff. Yea, if he said my ring was copper.

P. H. I say 'tis copper. Dar'st thou be as good as thy word now.

Falstaff. Why, Hal, thou knowest, as thou art but man, I dare; but as thou art Prince, I fear thee, as I fear the roaring of the lion's whelp.

P. H. And why not as the lion?

Falstaff. The King himself is to be fear'd as the lion; dost thou think I'll fear thee as I fear thy father? Nay an' I do, let my girdle break!

P. H. O, if it should, how would thy guts fall about thy knees! But, Sirrah, there's no room for faith, truth, nor honesty, in this bosom of thine: it is all filled up with guts and midriff. Charge an honest woman with picking thy pocket! why, thou whoreson, impudent, imbossed rascal, if there were any thing in thy pocket but tavern reckonings, memorandums of bawdy-houses, and one poor pennyworth of sugarcandy to make thee long-winded; if thy pocket were enriched with any other injuries but these, I am a villain; and yet you will stand

to it, you will not pocket up wrongs. Art thou not ashamed?

Falstaff. Dost thou hear, Hal? thou knowest in the state of innocency Adam fell; and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villany? Thou seest I have more flesh than another man, and therefore more frailty.

Then he adds, after an emphatic pause, and no doubt with a pointed application in the manner:

You confess then that *you* picked my pocket?

Prince Henry's reply is very remarkable. It is not direct: it contains no longer any raillery or reproach; it is almost a shuffling answer, and may be supposed to have been spoken after, or with some conscious confusion: "It appears so," says he, "from the story." Falstaff pushes him no further; but expresses his triumph, under the shew of moderation and indifference, in his address to the hostess.

Hostess, I forgive thee; go, make ready breakfast; love thy husband; look to thy servants; and cherish thy guests: thou shalt find me tractable to any honest reason: thou seest I am pacified.

I shall illustrate this particular circumstance in one other instance, not only because it is in itself curious; but as it tends to elucidate what may, without impropriety, be termed the catastrophè. Falstaff having imposed upon Shallow, borrows from him a thousand pounds. He has imposed upon him, by making him believe that his influence with the Prince, now King Henry, was all-powerful. Here the poet's good sense, his sense of propriety, his judgment, and invention, are indeed remarkable. It was not for a person so sensual, so cowardly, so arrogant, and so selfish, as Falstaff, to triumph in his deceitful arts.—But his punishment must be suitable. He is not a criminal like Richard; and his recompence must be different. Detection, disappointment in his fraudulent purposes, and the downfal of assumed importance, will satisfy poetical justice: and for such retribution, even from his earliest appearance, we see due preparation. The punishment is to be the result of his conduct, and to be accomplished by a regular progress*.

Butler's Analogy.

—Falstaff, who was studious of imposing on others, imposes upon himself. He becomes the dupe of his own artifice. Confident in his versatility, command of temper, presence of mind, and unabashed invention; encouraged too by the notice of the Prince, and thus flattering himself that he shall have some sway in his counsels, he lays the foundation of his own disappointment. Though the flatterer and parasite of Prince Henry, he does not deceive him. The Prince is thoroughly acquainted with his character, and is aware of his views. Yet in his wit, humour, and invention, he finds amusement. —Parasites, in the works of other poets, are the flatterers of weak men, and impress them with a belief of their merit or attachment. But Falstaff is the parasite of a person distinguished for ability or understanding. The Prince sees him in his real colours; yet, for the sake of present pastime, he suffers himself to seem deceived; and allows the parasite to flatter himself that his arts are not unsuccessful. The real state of his sentiments and feelings is finely described, when, at the battle of Shrewsbury, seeing

Falstaff lying among some dead bodies, he supposes him dead.

> What! old acquaintance! could not all this flesh keep in a little life? Poor Jack, farewell. I could have better spared a better man: O I should have a heavy miss of thee, if I were much in love with vanity.

But Prince Henry is not much in love with vanity. By his accession to the throne he feels himself under new obligations; and under the necessity of relinquishing improper pursuits. As he forms his resolution considerately, he adheres to it strictly. He does not hesitate, nor tamper with inclination. He does not gradually loosen, but bursts his fetters. "He casts "no longing lingering look behind." He forsakes every mean pursuit, and discards every worthless dependent. But he discards them with humanity: it is to avoid their influence; for all wise men avoid temptation: it is not to punish, but to correct their vices.

> I banish thee, on pain of death——
> Not to come near our person by ten miles
> For competence of life I will allow you,

That lack of means enforce you not to evil:
And as we hear you do reform yourselves,
We will, according to your strength and qualities,
Give you advancement.

Thus in the self-deceit of Falstaff, and in the discernment of Henry, held out to us on all occasions, we have a natural foundation for the catastrophe. The incidents too, by which it is accomplished, are judiciously managed. None of them are foreign or external; but grow, as it were, out of the characters.

Falstaff brings Shallow to London, to see and profit by his influence at court. He places himself in King Henry's way, as he returns from the coronation. He addresses him with familiarity; is neglected; persists, and is repulsed with sternness. His hopes are unexpectedly baffled: his vanity blasted: he sees his importance with those whom he had deceived completely ruined: he is for a moment unmasked: he views himself as he believes he appears to them: he sees himself in the mirror of their conception: he runs over the consequences of his humiliation: he translates their thoughts and

their opinions concerning him: he speaks to them in the tone of the sentiments which he attributes to them; and in the language which he thinks they would hold. "Master "Shallow, I owe you a thousand pounds." It is not that in his abasement he feels a transient return of virtue: it is rather that he sees himself for a moment helpless: he sees his assumed importance destroyed; and, among other consequences, that restitution of the sum he had borrowed will be required. This alarms him; and Shallow's answer gives him small consolation. He is roused from his sudden amazement: looks about for resources; and immediately finds them. His ingenuity comes instantly to his aid; and he tells Shallow, with great readiness and plausibility of invention,

> Do not you grieve at this. I shall be sent for in private to him: look you, he must seem thus to the world.—Fear not your advancement. I will be the man yet that shall make you great, &c. This that you heard was but a colour, &c. Go with me to dinner. Come, lieutenant Pistol; come, Bardolph; I shall be sent for soon at night.

Thus Shakespeare, whose morality is no less sublime than his skill in the display of

character is masterly and unrivalled, represents Falstaff, not only as a voluptuous and base sycophant, but totally incorrigible. He displays no quality or disposition which can serve as a basis for reformation. Even his abilities and agreeable qualities contribute to his depravity. Had he been less facetious, less witty, less dexterous, and less inventive, he might have been urged to self-condemnation, and so inclined to amendment. But mortification leads him to no conviction of folly, nor determines him to any change of life. He turns, as soon as possible, from the view given him of his baseness; and rattles, as it were in triumph, the fetters of habituated and willing bondage.——Lear, violent and impetuous, but yet affectionate, from his misfortunes derives improvement. Macbeth, originally a man of feeling, is capable of remorse. And the understanding of Richard, rugged and insensible though he be, betrays his heart to the assault of conscience. But the mean sensualist, incapable of honourable and worthy thoughts, is irretrievably lost; totally, and for ever depraved. An important and awful lesson!

I may be thought perhaps to have treated Falstaff with too much severity. I am aware of his being a favourite. Persons of eminent worth feel for him some attachment, and think him hardly used by the King. But if they will allow themselves to examine the character in all its parts, they will perhaps agree with me, that such feeling is delusive, and arises from partial views. They will not take it amiss, if I say that they are deluded in the same manner with Prince Henry. They are amused, and conceive an improper attachment to the means of their pleasure and amusement. I appeal to every candid reader, whether the sentiment expressed by Prince Henry be not that which every judicious spectator and reader is inclined to feel.

I could have better spar'd a better man.

Upon the whole, the character of Sir John Falstaff, consisting of various parts, produces various feelings. Some of these are agreeable, and some disagreeable: but, being blended together, the general and united effect is much stronger than if their

impulse had been disunited: not only so, but as the agreeable qualities are brought more into view, for in this sense alone they can be said to prevail in the character, and as the deformity of other qualities is often veiled by the pleasantry employed by the poet in their display, the general effect is in the highest degree delightful.

ESSAY VIII.

ON THE DRAMATIC CHARACTER OF KING LEAR.

DISINTERESTED principles are of different kinds: of consequence, the actions that flow from them are more or less beneficial, and more or less entitled to praise. We are moved by inconsiderate impulse to the performance of beneficent actions; as we are moved by inconsiderate impulse to the perpetration of guilt. You see an unhappy person; you discern the visitation of grief in his features; you hear it in the plaintive tones of voice; you are warmed with sudden and resistless emotion; you never enquire concerning the propriety of your feelings, or the merits of the sufferer; and you hasten to relieve him. Your conduct proceeds from inconsiderate impulse. It en-

titles you to the praise of sensibility, but not of reflection. You are again in the same situation; but the symptoms of distress do not produce in you the same ardent effects: you are moved with no violent agitation, and you feel little sympathy; but you perceive distress; you are convinced that the sufferer suffers unjustly; you know you are bound to relieve him; and in consequence of these convictions, you offer him relief. Your conduct proceeds from sense of duty; and though it entitles you to the credit of rational humanity, it does not entitle you, in this instance, to the praise of fine sensibility.

Those who perform beneficent actions, from immediate feeling or impetuous impulse, have a great deal of pleasure.—Their conduct, too, by the influence of sympathetic affection, imparts pleasure to the beholder. The joy felt both by the agent and the beholder is ardent, and approaches to rapture. There is also an energy in the principle, which produces great and uncommon exertions; yet both the principle of action, and the pleasure it produces, are shifting. "Beauteous as the morning cloud or the

"early dew;" like them, too, they pass away. The pleasure arising from knowledge of duty is less impetuous: it has no approaches to rapture; it seldom makes the heart throb, or the tear descend; and as it produces no transporting enjoyment, it seldom leads to uncommon exertion; but the joy it affords is uniform, steady, and lasting. As the conduct is most perfect, so our happiness is most complete, when both principles are united: when our convictions of duty are animated with sensibility; and sensibility guided by convictions of duty.

It is, indeed, to be regretted, that feeling and the knowledge of duty are not always united. It is deeply to be regretted, that unless sensibility be regulated by that knowledge of duty which arises from reflection on our own condition, and acquaintance with human nature, it may produce unhappiness both to ourselves and others; but chiefly to ourselves. To illustrate these consequences may be of service. It is often no less important to point out the nature and evil effects of seeming excellence, than of acknowledged depravity; besides,

it will exhibit the human mind in a striking situation.

The subject, perhaps, is unpopular.—It is the fashion of the times to celebrate feeling; and the conduct flowing from sedater principles is pronounced cold and ungenial. It is the conduct, we are told of those dispassionate minds who never deviate to the right hand or the left; who travel through life unnoticed: and as they are never visited by the ecstacies of sensibility, they enjoy unenvied immunity from its delicate sorrows. What pretensions have they to the distinction of weak nerves or exquisite feeling? They know so little of the melancholy and of the refined impatience, so often the portion of sentimental spirits, that they are absurd enough to term them chagrin and ill humour. In truth, sentiment and sensibility have been the subject of so many tales and sermons, that the writer who would propose the union of feeling with reflection, may perhaps incur much fastidious disdain: we shall, therefore, go forth upon this adventure under the banner of a powerful snd respectable leader. Shake-

speare was no less intimately acquainted with the principles of human conduct, than excellent in delineation; and has exhibited in his Dramatic Character of King Lear the man of mere sensibility.

I. Those who are guided in their conduct by impetuous impulse, arising from sensibility, and undirected by reflection, are liable to *extravagant* or *outrageous* excess. Transported by their own emotions, they misapprehend the condition of others; they are prone to exaggeration; and even the good actions they perform, excite amazement rather than approbation. Lear, an utter stranger to adverse fortune, and under the power of excessive affection, believed that his children were in every respect deserving. During this ardent and inconsiderate mood, he ascribed to them such corresponding sentiments as justified his extravagant fondness. He saw his children as the gentlest and most affectionate of the human race. What condescension, on his part, could be a suitable reward for their filial piety? He divides his kingdom among them; they

will relieve him from the cares of royalty; and to his old age will afford consolation.

> ——'tis our fast intent
> To shake all cares and business from our age,
> Conferring them on younger strengths.

But he is not only extravagant in his love; he is no less outrageous in his displeasure. Kent, moved with zeal for his interest, remonstrates, with the freedom of conscious integrity, against his conduct to Cordelia; and Lear, impatient of good counsel, not only rebukes him with unbecoming asperity, but inflicts unmerited punishment.

> Five days we do allot thee for provision,
> To shield thee from diseases of the world;
> And on the sixth to turn thy hated back
> Upon our kingdom: if on the tenth day following
> Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
> The moment is thy death.

II. The conduct proceeding from unguided feeling will be *capricious*. In minds where principles of regular and permanent influence have no authority, every feeling has a right to command; and every im-

pulse, how sudden soever, is regarded, during the season of its power, with entire approbation.

All such feelings and impulses are not only admitted, but obeyed; and lead us, without hesitation or reflection, to a corresponding deportment. But the objects with which we are conversant, often vary their aspects, and are seen by us in different attitudes. This may be owing to accidental connection or comparison with other things, of a similar, or of a different nature; or it may be owing, and this is most frequently the case, to some accidental mood or humour of our own. A fine landscape, viewed in different lights, may appear more or less beautiful; yet the landscape in itself may remain unaltered; nor will the person who views it pronounce it in reality less beautiful than it was, though he sees it with a setting rather than with a rising sun. The capricious inconstancy of persons governed by no regular and permanent principles is apt to display itself, when unfortunately they form expectations, and sustain disappointment. Moved by an ardent mood, they regard the

objects of their affection with extravagant transport; they transfer to them their own dispositions; they make no allowance for differences of condition or state of mind; and expect returns suitable to their own unreasonable ardours. They are disappointed; they feel pain; in proportion to the violence of the disappointed passion, is the pang of repulse. This rouses a sense of wrong, and excites their resentment. The new feelings operate with as much force as the former. No enquiry is made concerning the reasonableness of the conduct they would produce. Resentment and indignation are felt; and merely because they are felt, they are deemed just and becoming.

Cordelia was the favourite daughter of Lear. Her sisters had replied to him, with an extravagance suited to the extravagance of his affection. He expected much more from Cordelia. Yet her reply was better suited to the relation that subsisted between them, than to the fondness of his present humour. He is disappointed, pained, and provoked. No gentle advocate resides in his bosom to mitigate the rigour of his dis-

pleasure. He follows the blind impulse of his resentment; reproaches and abandons Cordelia.

> Let it be so; thy truth then be thy dower:
> For, by the sacred radiance of the sun——
> Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
> Propinquity and property of blood;
> And, as a stranger to my heart and me,
> Hold thee from this for ever.

Unhappy are they who have established no system concerning the character of their friends; and who have ascertained, by the aid of reason or observation, no measure of their virtues or infirmities. No affectionate inmate possesses their bosoms, the vicegerent of indulgent affection, to plead in your behalf, if from inadvertency, or the influence of a wayward, but transient mood, affecting either you or themselves, you act differently from your wonted conduct, or differently from their expectations. Thus their appearances are as variable as that of the camelion: they now shine with the fairest colours; and in an instant they are changed into sable. In vain would you ask for a reason. You may enquire of the winds; or

question their morning dreams. Yet they are ardent in protestations; they give assurances of lasting attachment; but they are not to be trusted. Not that they intend to deceive you. They have no such intention. They are vessels without rudder or anchor, driven by every blast that blows. Their assurances are the colours impressed by a sunbeam on the breast of a watery cloud: they are formed into a beautiful figure: they shine for a moment with every exquisite tint; in a moment they vanish, and leave nothing but a drizzly shower in their stead.

III. Those who are guided by inconsiderate feeling, will often appear *variable* in their conduct, and of course *irresolute.* There is no variety of feeling to which persons of great sensibility are more liable, than that of great elevation or depression of spirits. The sudden and unaccountable transitions from the one to the other, are not less striking, than the vast difference of which we are conscious in the one mood or in the other. In an elevated state of spirits, we form projects, entertain hopes, conceive our-

selves capable of great exertion, think highly of ourselves, and in this hour of transport, undervalue obstacles or opposition. In a moment of depression, the scene is altered: the sky lowers; nature ceases to smile; or if she smile, it is not to us; we feel ourselves feeble, forsaken, and hopeless; all things, human and divine, have conspired against us. Having no adequate opinion of ourselves, or no just apprehension of the state of opinions concerning us, we think that no great exertion or display of merit is expected from us, and of course we grow indifferent about our conduct. Thus the mind, at one instant, aspires to heaven, is bold, enterprising, disdainful, and supercilious: the wind changes—we are baffled or fatigued; and the spirit formerly so full of ardour, becomes humble and passive.

Lear had suffered insult and ingratitude from his eldest daughter. He boils with resentment; he expresses it with imprecations, and leaves her: but his mind, harassed and teased, suffers sore agitation, and is enfeebled. He looks of course for relief; indulges confidence in his second daughter;

from her he expects consolation; anticipates a kindly reception; yields to that depression of mind, which is connected with the wish and expectation of pity; he longs to complain; and to mingle his tears with the sympathetic sorrows of Regan. Thus entirely reduced, he discerns, even in Regan, symptoms of disaffection. Yet, in his present state, he will not believe them. They are forced upon his observation; and Kent, who was exiled for wishing to moderate his wrath against Cordelia, is obliged to stimulate his displeasure at Regan. Yet, in the weakness of his present depression, and longings for affectionate pity, he would repose on her tenderness, and addresses her with full confidence in her love:

> No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse.
> ——————'Tis not in thee
> To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes, &c.
> ——————Thou better know'st
> The offices of nature.

In the whole intercourse between Lear and Regan, we see a contest between Lear's indignant and resentful emotions, excited

by the indications of Regan's disaffection, and those fond expectations and desires of sympathetic tenderness, which proceed from, and in their turn contribute to depression of spirit. Thus he condescends to entreat and remonstrate:

> I gave you all!

At length, repulsed and insulted by Regan, totally cast down and enfeebled, he forgets his determined hatred of Goneril; and in the misery of his depression, irresolute and inconsistent, he addresses her as his last resource:

> ——————Not being the worst,
> Stands in some need of praise; I'll go with thee;
> Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,
> And thou art twice her love.

Here he is again disappointed. He has no other resource. His mind, originally of a keen and impetuous nature, is now unoccupied with any tender sentiment. Accordingly, at the close of this interesting scene, we see him forcing himself as it were

from his depression, and expressing his undiminished resentment.

> You Heavens, give me that patience which I need;
> You see me here, you Gods, a poor old man,
> As full of grief as age; wretched in both!
> If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
> Against their father, fool me not so much
> To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger:
> O let not women's weapons, water drops,
> Stain my man's cheeks: no you unnatural hags,
> I will have such revenges on you both,
> That all the world shall—I will do such things—
> What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be,
> The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep—
> No, I'll not weep.
> I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
> Shall break into an hundred thousand flaws,
> Or e'er I'll weep—O Fool, I shall go mad.

Inconsistency of conduct, and of consequence, irresolution, occasioned by irregular and undirected feelings, proceed from other states of mind than depression of spirits. Of this some examples different from the present now occur to me. They illustrate the general position, and may therefore be mentioned.

Lorenzino de Medicis* had a lively fancy; he was a courtier, ambitious, and had his imagination filled with ideas of pageantry. He wished to enjoy pre-eminence; but Alexander, the reigning Prince, was an obstacle to be removed; and this could only be done by despoiling him of life. The difficulty no doubt was great; yet it figured less to his heated imagination, than the dignity and enjoyment he had in view. Elegant in his manners, accomplished with every pleasing endowment; of soft and insinuating address; he had, nevertheless, no secret counsellor in his breast, to plead in behalf of justice. Thus prompted, and thus unguarded, he perpetrates the death of his sovereign. He sees his blood streaming; hears him groaning in the agonies of death; beholds him convulsed in the pangs of departing life: a new set of feelings arise; the delicate accomplished courtier, who could meditate atrocious injury, cannot, without being astonished, witness the bloody object; he remains motionless, irresolute, appalled at the deed: and in this state of amazement,

* See Robertson's History of the Reign of Charles V.

instead of prosecuting his design, he betakes himself to sudden flight. After some time he is seized, and punished as he deserves.

Voltaire gives a similar account of his hero, Lewis. After describing in lively colours the desolation perpetrated by his authority in the Palatinate; the conflagration of cities, and the utter ruin of the inhabitants; he subjoins, that these orders were issued from Versailles, from the midst of pleasures; and that, on a nearer view, the calamities he thus occasioned would have filled him with horror. That is, Lewis, like all men of irregular sensibility, was governed by the influences of objects operating immediately on his senses; and so according to such accidental mood as depended on present images, he was humane or inhuman. Lewis and Lorenzino, in those instances, were men of feeling, but not of virtue.

IV. The man of ungoverned sensibility, is in danger of becoming *morose* or *inhuman*. He entertains sanguine hopes; he allows every feeling to reign in his breast uncon-

trouled; his judgment is dazzled; and his imagination riots in rapturous dreams of enjoyment. Every object of his wishes is arrayed in seducing colours, and brought immediately within his reach. He engages in the pursuit; encounters difficulties of which he was not aware; his ravishing expectations subside; he had made no provision for arduous adventure; his imagination becomes a traitor; the dangers and difficulties appear more formidable than they really are; and he abandons his undertaking. His temper is of consequence altered. No longer elated with hope, he becomes the prey of chagrin, of envy, or of resentment. Even suppose him successful, his enjoyments are not equal to his hopes. His desires were excessive, and no gratification whatever can allay the vehemence of their ardour. He is discontented, restless, and unhappy. In a word, irregular feelings, and great sensibility, produce extravagant desires; these lead to disappointment; and in minds that are undisciplined, disappointment begets moroseness, and anger. These dispositions again, will display themselves,

according to the condition or character of him who feels them. Men of feeble constitutions, and without power over the fortunes of other men, under such malign influences, become fretful, invidious, and misanthropical. Persons of firmer structure, and unfortunately possessed of power, under such direction, become inhuman. Herod was a man of feeling. Witness his conduct to Mariamne. At one time elegant, courteous, and full of tenderness; his fondness was as unbounded, as the virtues and graces of Mariamne were unrivalled. At other times, offended because her expressions of mutual affection were not as excessive as the extravagance of his own emotions, he became suspicious without cause. Thus affectionate, fond, suspicious, resentful, and powerful, in the phrenzy of irregular feeling, he put to death his beloved Mariamne.

Lear, in the representation of Shakespeare, possessing great sensibility, and full of affection, seeks a kind of enjoyment suited to his temper. Ascribing the same sensibility and affection to his daughters, for they must have it, no doubt, by hereditary

right, he forms a pleasing dream of reposing his old age under the wings of their kindly protection. He is disappointed; he feels extreme pain and resentment; he vents his resentment; but he has no power. Will he then become morose and retired? His habits and temper will not give him leave. Impetuous, and accustomed to authority, consequently of an unyielding nature, he would wreak his wrath, if he were able, in deeds of excessive violence. He would do, he knows not what. He who could pronounce such imprecations against Goneril, as, notwithstanding her guilt, appear shocking and horrid, would, in the moment of his resentment, have put her to death. If, without any ground of offence, he could abandon Cordelia, and cast off his favourite child, what would he not have done to the unnatural and pitiless Regan?

Here, then, we have a curious spectacle: a man accustomed to bear rule, suffering sore disappointment, and grievous wrongs; high minded, impetuous, susceptible of extreme resentment, and incapable of yielding to splenetic silence, or malignant retire-

ment. What change can befall his spirit? For his condition is so altered, that his spirit also must suffer change. What! but to have his understanding torn up by the hurricane of passion, to scorn consolation, to lose his reason! Shakespeare could not avoid making Lear distracted. Other poets exhibit madness, because they chuse it, or for the sake of variety, or to deepen the distress; but Shakespeare has exhibited the madness of Lear, as the natural effect of such suffering on such a character. It was an event in the progress of Lear's mind, driven by such feelings, desires, and passions, as the poet ascribes to him, as could not be avoided. No circumstance in Lear's madness is more affecting than his dreadful anticipation and awful consciousness of its approach.

> You think I'll weep;
> No I'll not weep; I have full cause of weeping;
> But this heart shall break into a thousand flaws,
> Or e'er I'll weep:—O fool, I shall go mad.

V. Lear, thus extravagant, inconsistent, inconstant, capricious, variable, irresolute,

and impetuously vindictive, is almost an object of disapprobation. But our poet, with his usual skill, blends the disagreeable qualities with such circumstances as correct this effect, and form one delightful assemblage. Lear, in his good intentions, was without deceit; his violence is not the effect of premeditated malignity; his weaknesses are not crimes, but often the effects of misruled affections. This is not all: he is an old man; an old king; an aged father; and the instruments of his suffering are undutiful children. He is justly entitled to our compassion; and the incidents last mentioned, though they imply no merit, yet procure some respect. Add to all this, that he becomes more and more interesting towards the close of the drama; not merely because he is more and more unhappy, but because he becomes really more deserving of our esteem. His misfortunes correct his misconduct; they rouse *reflection*, and lead him to that *reformation which we approve*. We see the commencement of this reformation, after he has been dismissed by Goneril, and meets with symptoms of disaffec-

tion in Regan. He who abandoned Cordelia with impetuous outrage, and banished Kent for offering an apology in her behalf; seeing his servant grossly maltreated, and his own arrival unwelcomed, has already sustained some chastisement: he does not express that ungoverned violence which his preceding conduct might lead us to expect. He restrains his emotion in its first ebullition, and reasons concerning the probable causes of what seemed so inauspicious.

Lear. The King would speak with Cornwall; the dear father
Would with his daughter speak, commands her service:
Are they inform'd of this?—My breath and blood!—
Fiery—the fiery Duke? Tell the hot Duke that—
No—but not yet—may be he is not well—
Infirmity doth still neglect all office,
Whereto our health is bound: we're not ourselves
When nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind
To suffer with the body—I'll forbear;
And am fallen out with my more heady will,
To take the indispos'd and sickly fit,
For the sound man.

As his misfortunes increase, we find him still more inclined to reflect on his situation. He does not, indeed, express blame of him-

self; yet he expresses no sentiment whatever of overweening conceit. He seems rational and modest; and the application to himself is extremely pathetic:

> ——————Close pent up guilts,
> Rive your concealing continents, and cry
> These dreadful summoners grace.—I am a man
> More sinn'd against than sinning.

Soon after, we find him actually pronouncing censure upon himself. Hitherto he had been the mere creature of sensibility: he now begins to reflect; and grieves that he had not done so before.

> Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm!
> How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
> Your loop'd and window'd raggedness defend you
> From seasons such as these?—O, I have ta'en
> Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
> And shew the heavens more just.

At last, he is in a state of perfect contrition, and expresses less resentment against Goneril and Regan, than self-condemnation

for his treatment of Cordelia, and a perfect, but not extravagant sense of her affection.

Kent. The poor distress'd Lear is i' the town,
Who sometime, in his better tune, remembers
What we are come about, and by no means
Will yield to see his daughter.
Gent. Why, good Sir?
Kent. A sovereign shame so elbows him, his unkindness,
That stript her from his benediction, turn'd her
To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights
To his dog-hearted daughters: these things sting
His mind so venomously, that burning shame
Detains him from Cordelia.

I have thus endeavoured to shew, that mere sensibility, undirected by reflection, leads men to an extravagant expression both of social or unsocial feelings; renders them capriciously inconstant in their affections; variable, and of course irresolute, in their conduct. These things, together with the miseries entailed by such deportment, seem to me well illustrated by Shakespeare, in his Dramatic Character of King Lear.

ESSAY IX.

ON THE

DRAMATIC CHARACTER OF TIMON OF ATHENS.

SHAKESPEARE, in his Timon of Athens, illustrates the consequences of that inconsiderate profusion which has the appearance of liberality, and is supposed even by the inconsiderate person himself to proceed from a generous principle; but which, in reality, has its chief origin in the love of distinction. Though this is not the view usually entertained of this singular dramatic character, I persuade myself, if we attend to the design of the poet in all its parts, we shall find, that the opinion now advanced is not without foundation.

The love of distinction is asserted to be the ruling principle in the conduct of Timon; yet it is not affirmed, nor is it necessary to affirm, that Timon has no goodness of heart. He has much goodness, gentleness, and love of society.—These are not inconsistent with the love of distinction; they often reside together; and in particular, that love of distinction which reigned in the conduct of Timon, may easily be shewn to have received its particular bias and direction from original goodness. For without this, what could have determined him to choose one method of making himself conspicuous rather than another? Why did he not seek the distinction conferred by the display of a military or of a political character? Or why did he not aspire after pageantry and parade, the pomp of public buildings, and the ostentation of wealth, unconnected with any kind of beneficence?

In general, our love of fame or distinction is directed and influenced by some previous cast of temper, or early tendency of disposition. Moved by powers and dispositions leading us to one kind of exertion rather

than another, we attribute superior excellence to such exertion. We transfer the same sentiment to the rest of mankind. We fancy, that no pre-eminence can be attained but by such talents as we possess; and it requires an effort of cool reflection, before we can allow that there may be excellence in those things which we cannot relish, or merit in that conduct to which we are not inclined. Guided by early or inherent predilection, men actuated by the love of distinction seek the idol of their desires, in various situations; in the bustle of active life, or in the shade of retirement. Take the following examples. The son of Olorus was present, while yet a boy, at the Olympic games. All Greece was assembled; many feats of dexterity no doubt were exhibited; and every honor that assembled Greece could bestow, was conferred on the victors. Moved by a spectacle so interesting and so inspiriting, the Spartan, Theban, or Athenian youth, who were not yet of vigor sufficient to strive for the wreath, longed, we may readily suppose, for maturer years; and became, in their ardent imaginations,

skilful wrestlers and charioteers. The son of Olorus, if we may judge by the consequence, felt little emotion; no sympathetic longings; and no impatience, to drive a chariot. But hearing Herodotus, on that occasion, reciting his history, he felt other sensations: his heart throbbed, and the tears descended. The venerable historian observed him weeping, and comprehending his character, "I give thee joy," said he to his father, "for the happy genius of thy son." Now, the son of Olorus became an historian no less renowned than Herodotus: for Herodotus and Thucydides are usually named together. The celebrated Turenne, in his early days, was an admirer, no less passionate, of Quintus Curtius, than the son of Olorus was of Herodotus; and we are told by Ramsay, from D'Ablancourt, that when not yet twelve years of age, he challenged an officer who called his favorite history a romance. But this admiration was not so much for the graces of flowery composition which abound in the Roman historian, as for the splendid actions of Alexander. These drew his attention, and soon after, his imi-

tation. Though his breast heaved, and his eyes sparkled in the perusal of favorite passages, he was not led to write fine descriptions like Curtius; but to break horses like the son of Philip.

Now, since those who are actuated by the love of distinction, are led, by early or inherent predilection, to one kind of action rather than another, we have no difficulty in allowing principles of goodness and humanity to have reigned, early or originally, in the breast of Timon. Nay, after losing their authority, they continued for some time to attend him; and resided in that breast where they formerly reigned. They became like those eastern princes, or those early sovereigns of a neighbouring country, who grew so indolent and passive, that they lay immured in their apartments, and left the management of the state to some active minister, an ambitious vizier, or mayor of the palace. Some of these ministers acted for a while under the banner of the sovereign's authority: but afterwards, having left him but the shadow of power, they

promoted themselves; became supreme and despotic.

Here, however, we are led to enquire, how happens it that a principle inherent in the soul, and once an active principle, becomes passive, suffers others to operate in its stead; not only so, but to perform similar functions, assume corresponding appearances, and, in general, to be guided apparently to the same tenor of conduct? Did the energy of the inherent affection suffer abatement by frequent exercise? Or were there no kindred principles in the soul to support and confirm its authority? Could not reason, or the sense of duty support, and the power of active habit confirm? How came the sultan to submit to the vizier?

In general, original principles and feelings become passive, if they are not, in their first operation, confirmed by reason and conviction of duty; and if the passion which springs up in their place assumes their appearance, and acts apparently as they would have done. Nothing is more imposing than this species of usurpation.

It is not the open assault of a foe, but the guile of pretended friendship. Nothing contributes more to dangerous self-deception. Applying this remark to our present subject, and following the lights of observation, we shall briefly illustrate, how early or inherent goodness may be subverted by the love of distinction. A person of good dispositions, inclined by his temper and constitution to perform acts of beneficence, receives pleasure in the performance. He also receives applause. He has done good, and is told of it. Thus he receives pleasure, not only from having gratified a native impulse, but from the praise of mankind, and the gratitude of those whom he may have served. The applauses he receives are more liberally bestowed by designing and undeserving persons, than by the deserving and undesigning. The deserving depend too much on the permanency of the original principle, independent of encouragement; and may therefore be too sparing in their approbation. Gustavus Adolphus used to say, that valour needed encouragement; and was therefore unreserved in his

praises. The same may be said of every virtue. But designing, or undeserving persons, transferring their own dispositions to other men, and of course apprehensive lest the wheels and springs of benevolence should contract rust, are oiling them for ever with profuse adulation. Meantime, our man of liberality begins to be moved by other principles than fine feelings and constitutional impulse. The pleasure arising from such actions as these produce, is too fine and too delicate, compared with the joys conferred by loud and continued applauses. Thus his taste becomes vitiated; he not only acquires an undue relish for adulation, but is uneasy without it; he contracts a false appetite; and solicits distinction, not so much for the pleasure it yields him, as to remove a disagreeable craving. Thus, such benevolent actions as formerly proceeded from constitutional goodness, have now their origin in the love of praise and distinction. Goodness may remain in his breast a passive guest; and having no other power than to give countenance to the prevailing principle. It may thus reign in his

language and reveries; but the love of distinction directs his conduct. The superseded monarch enjoys the parade of state, and annexes his signature and sanction to the deeds of his active minister.

Perhaps it may now seem probable, that a man of constitutional goodness may perform beneficent actions, not from principles of humanity, though these may actually reside in his breast; but from the desire of being distinguished as a generous person; and that in the mean while, not discerning his real motives, he shall imagine himself actuated by pure generosity. That such characters may exist, is all that is hitherto asserted. That Shakespeare has exhibited an illustration, accurately defined and exquisitely featured, in his Timon of Athens, we shall now endeavour to shew. We shall endeavour to ascertain and trace, in the conduct of Timon, the marks of that beneficence which proceeds from the love of distinction. We shall, at the same time, endeavour to trace the causes of the strange alteration that took place in his temper; and delineate the operations of those cir-

cumstances that changed him from being apparently social, and full of affection, into an absolute misanthrope.

I. Real goodness is not ostentatious. Not so is the goodness of Timon. Observe him in the first scene of the tragedy: trumpets sound; Timon enters; he is surrounded with senators, poets, painters, and attendants; chooses that moment to display his beneficence; and accompanies his benefits with a comment on his own noble nature.

> I am not of that feather, to shake off
> My friend when he must need me.

II. He is impatient of admonition. Knowing that he was formerly influenced by sentiments of humanity, he supposes that their power remains unchanged; and that, as he continues to do good, his principles of action are still the same. He is exposed to this self-imposition, not only by the tendency which all men have to deceive themselves, but by the flatteries and praises he is fond of receiving.—Of consequence, he would suffer pain by being undeceived; he would

lose the pleasure of that distinction which he so earnestly pursues; the prevailing passion would be counteracted: thus, there is a disposition in his soul, which leads him to be displeased with the truth; and who that is offended with the truth, can endure admonition?

Ap. Thou giv'st so long, Timon, I fear me thou
Wilt give away thyself in paper shortly:
What need these feasts, pomps, and vain glories?
Tim. Nay,
An' you begin to rail on society once,
I am sworn not to give regard to you.
Farewell, and come with better music.
Ap. So——
Thou wilt not hear me now.
———Oh, that men's ears should be
To counsel deaf, but not to flattery.

III. The same self-deceit which renders him deaf to counsel, renders him solicitous and patient of excessive applause. He endures even the grossest adulation. Notwithstanding the covering which hides him from himself, he cannot be quite confident that his principles are just what he wishes and imagines them to be. The applauses he receives tend to obviate his uncertainty,

and reconcile him to himself. Yet, it is not affirmed, that the man of conscious merit is either insensible of fame, or careless of reputation. He feels and enjoys them both; but, having less need of external evidence to strengthen him in the belief of his own integrity, he is less voracious of praise, and more acute in the discernment of flattery.

IV. The favours bestowed by Timon, are not often of such a kind as to do real service to the persons who receive them. Wishing to be celebrated for his bounty, he is liberal in such a manner as shall be most likely to draw attention, and particularly to provoke the ostentation of those, on account of his munificence, whom he is inclined to benefit. He is therefore more liberal in gratifying their passions, and particularly their vanity, than in relieving their wants; and more desirous of contributing to flatter their imaginations, than to promote their improvement. Though he performs some actions of real humanity, and even these he performs in a public manner, yet his munificence

appears chiefly in his banquets and shewy presents.

V. He acts in the same manner, in the choice he makes of those whom he serves, and on whom he confers his favours. He is not so solicitous of alleviating the distress of obscure affliction, as of gratifying those who enjoy some degree of distinction, or have it in their power to proclaim his praises. He is not represented as visiting the cottage of the fatherless and widow; but is wonderfully generous to men of high rank and character. He is desirous of encouraging merit; but the merit must be already known and acknowledged. Instead of drawing bashful worth from obscurity, he bestows costly baubles on those eminent or reputable persons who will be attended to, if they publish his praises. These are such displays of beneficence, as a man of genuine goodness would be apt to avoid. Yet, the persons whom Timon honours and obliges, are loquacious poets, flattering painters, great generals, and mighty elders.

Tim. I take all, and your several visitations,
So kind to heart, 'tis not enough to give;
Methinks I could deal kingdoms to my friends,
And ne'er be weary. Alcibiades,
Thou art a soldier, therefore seldom rich;
It comes in charity to thee; for all thy living
Is 'mongst the dead; and all the lands thou hast
Lie in a pitched field.——

Yet, this seeming want of discernment in Timon, is not to be considered as a proof of weak understanding. Our poet, who has omitted nothing to render the features of this character, though perhaps not obvious, yet so distinct, consistent, and perfectly united, that there is scarcely a lineament too little or too much, has guarded him from this objection, and represents him as a man of ability. When the state and rulers of Athens, in the hour of extreme urgency and distress, are threatened with an assault by Alcibiades, whom they had treated with disrespect, they have recourse for advice and assistance to no other than Timon. They tell him in terms of humble entreaty:

Therefore, to please thee to return with us,
And of our Athens (thine and ours) to take

The captainship, thou shalt be met with thanks,
Allow'd with absolute power, and thy good name
Live with authority; so soon shall we drive back
Of Alcibiades the approaches wild,
Who, like a boar, too savage, doth root up
His country's peace.——

VI. Timon is not more ostentatious, impatient of admonition, desirous of applause, injudicious in his gifts, and undistinguishing in the choice of his friends, than he is profuse. Desirous of superlative praises, he endeavours, by lavish beneficence, to have unbounded returns.

————He outgoes
The very heart of kindness——
————Plutus, the god of wealth,
Is but his steward.

The poet, with judicious invention, deduces the chief incident in the play, namely, the reverse of Timon's fortune, from this circumstance in his conduct. The vanity of Timon renders him profuse; and profusion renders him indigent.

VII. The character we are describing,

sets a greater value on the favours he confers than they really deserve. Of a mind undisciplined by reason, and actuated solely by passion, he conceives the state of things to be exactly such as his present mood and desire represent them. Wishing to excite a high sense of favour, he believes he has done so, and that the gratifications he bestows are much greater than what they are. He is the more liable to this self-imposition, that many of those he is inclined to gratify, are no less lavish of their adulation than he is of his fortune. He does not perceive that the raptures they express are not for the benefit they have received, but for what they expect; and imagines, while his chambers

Blaze with lights, and bray with minstrelsy,

while his cellars weep "with drunken spilth "of wine," while he is giving away horses, and precious stones, entertaining the rulers and chief men of Athens, that he is kindling in their breasts a sense of friendship and obligation. He fondly fancies that,

in his utmost need, he will receive from them every sort of assistance; and without reserve or reluctance, lays immediate claim to their bounty.

——You to Lord Lucius;
To Lord Lucullus, you—You to Sempronius:
Commend me to their loves—and I am proud, say,
That my occasions have found time to use them
Toward a suppiy of money: let the request
Be fifty talents.——
Go you, Sir, to the senators,
(Of whom, even to the state's best health, I have
Deserved this hearing,) bid them send o' the instant,
A thousand talents to me.

VIII. Need we be surprised that Timon, and men of his character, should meet with disappointment? Howsoever they may impose upon themselves, though they may believe that they are moved by real friendship, and are conferring real benefits, the rest of mankind discern, and disapprove of their conduct. Even those very persons, who, by adulation, and a mean acceptance of favours, have contributed to their delusion, feel, or conceive themselves, under no obligation. The benefits they received were

unsolicited, or unimportant; and the friendship of their benefactor was not so genuine as he believed. Thus, then, Timon demands a requital of his good deeds; he meets with refusal: when he solicits the affections of his professing friends, he is answered with coldness.

> *Str.* Why, this is the world's soul;
> And just of the same piece is every flatt'rer's spirit,
> —Timon has been this Lord's father—
> He ne'er drinks,
> But Timon's silver treads upon his lip;
> And yet, (O see the monstrousness of man,
> When he looks out in an ungrateful shape,)
> He does deny him, in respect of his,
> What charitable men afford to beggars.

There is no one passage in the whole tragedy more happily conceived and expressed than the conduct of Timon's flatterers. Their various contrivances to avoid giving him assistance, shew diversity of character; and their behaviour is well contrasted, by the sincere sorrow and indignation of Timon's servants. They are held out to deserved scorn, by their easy belief that the decay of their benefactor's fortunes was only

pretended, and by their consequent renewal of mean assiduities.

IX. It remains to be mentioned, that such disappointment, in tempers like that of Timon, begets not only resentment at individuals, but aversion at all mankind.

Timon imposes on himself; and while he is really actuated by a selfish passion, fancies himself entirely disinterested. Yet he has no select friends; and no particular attachments. He receives equally the deserving and undeserving; the stranger and the familiar acquaintance. Of consequence, those persons with whom he seems intimate, have no concern in his welfare; yet, vainly believing that he merits their affections, he solicits their assistance, and sustains disappointment. His resentment is roused; and he suffers as much pain, though perhaps of a different kind, as, in a similar situation, a person of true affection would suffer. But its object is materially different. For against whom is his anger excited? Not against one individual, for he had no individual attachment; but against all those who occa-

sioned his disappointment: that is, against all those who were, or whom he desired should be, the objects of his beneficence; in other words, against all mankind. In such circumstances, the violence of resentment will be proportioned to original sensibility; and Shakespeare, accordingly, has represented the wrath of Timon as indulging itself in furious invective, till it grows into lasting aversion.

Tim. Who dares, who dares,
In purity of manhood stand upright,
And say, this man's a flatterer? If one be,
So are they all; for every greeze of fortune
Is smoothed by that below: the learned pate
Ducks to the golden fool: all is oblique—
————Therefore be abhorr'd,
All feasts, societies, and throngs of men!
His semblable, yea himself, Timon disdains;
Destruction phang mankind! Earth, yield me roots!
[*Digging.*
Who seeks for better of thee, sauce his palate
With thy most operant poison.

Timon, not merely from affection, but from vanity, and confidence in his own discernment, believed that those persons whom

he distinguished were endowed with superior merit. He finds he has been mistaken: but the influences of vanity still continue; and he concludes, that since those whom he reckoned deserving are really worthless, much more so are all those who never merited his attention. If his own selected friends are unworthy, the rest of mankind are worse; and are regarded by him as fit objects of hatred or of contempt.

> Therefore be abhorr'd
> All feasts, societies, and throngs of men!

The symptoms already mentioned are numerous, and indicate to the attentive observer, that the state of Timon's mind is more distempered with a selfish passion than he believes: yet the poet, by a device suited to his own masterly invention, contrives an additional method of conveying a distinct and explicit view of the real design. Apemantus, a character well invented and well supported, has no other business in the play, than to explain the principles of Timon's conduct. His cynic surliness, indeed, forms a striking contrast to the smoothness of Ti-

mon's flatterers; but he is chiefly considered as unveiling the principal character. His manners are fierce; but his intentions are friendly: his invectives are bitter; but his remarks are true. He tells the flattering poet who had written a panegyric on Timon, that he was worthy of him; and adds, even in Timon's presence,

He that loves to be flattered, is worthy of the flatterer.

He tells Timon, inviting him to his banquet,

I scorn thy meat; 'twould choke me, for I should ne'er flatter thee.

Elsewhere he gives him admonitions to the very same purpose; and, finding his advice undervalued, he subjoins—"I will lock "thy heaven from thee;" meaning, as a commentator has well explained it, the pleasure of being flattered. He afterwards tells him, having followed him, nevertheless, into his solitude, with intentions of rendering him some assistance;

——————What, thinkest
That the bleak air, thy boisterous chamberlain,
Will put thy shirt on warm? Will these moss'd trees,
That have outliv'd the eagle, page thy heels,

And skip when thou point'st out? Wilt the cold brook,
Candied with ice, caudle thy morning taste,
To cure thy o'er-night's surfeit? Call the creatures
Whose naked natures live in all the spite
Of wreckful heaven, whose bare unhoused trunks
To the conflicting elements exposed,
Answer mere nature—bid them flatter thee—
O! thou shalt find——

There are few instances of a dramatic character, executed with such strict regard to unity of design, as that of Timon. This is not all. It is not enough to say, that all the parts of his conduct are consistent, or connected with one general principle. They have an union of a more intimate nature. All the qualities in his character, and all the circumstances in his conduct, lead to one final event. They all co-operate, directly or indirectly, in the accomplishment of one general purpose. It is as if the poet had proposed to demonstrate, how persons of good temper, and social dispositions, may become misanthropical. He assumes the social dispositions to be constitutional, and not confirmed by reason or by reflection. He then employs the love of distinction to bring about the conclusion. He shews its effects,

in superseding the influence of better principles, in assuming their appearance, and so, in establishing self-deceit. He shews its effects, in producing ostentation, injudicious profusion, and disappointment. And lastly, he shews how its effects contributed to excite and exasperate those bitter feelings which estranged Timon from all mankind. Timon, at the beginning of the drama, seems altogether humane and affectionate; at the end, he is an absolute misanthrope. Such opposition indicates inconsistency of character; unless the change can be traced through its causes and progress. If it can be traced, and if the appearance shall seem natural, this aspect of the human mind affords a curious and very interesting spectacle. Observe, in an instance or two, the fine lineaments and delicate shadings of this singular character. The poet refuses admission even to those circumstances which may be suitable, and consistent enough with the general principle; but which would rather *coincide* with the main design, than *contribute* to its consummation. Timon is lavish; but he is neither dissolute nor intemperate. He is convivial;

but he enjoys the banquet not in his own, but in the pleasure of his guests. Though he displays the pomp of a masquerade, Phrynia and Timandria are in the train not of Timon, but of Alcibiades. He tells us, alluding to the correctness of his deportment,

> No villainous bounty yet hath pass'd my heart;
> Unwisely, not ignobly, have I given.

We may observe, too, that he is not so desirous of being distinguished for mere external magnificence, as of being eminent for courteous and beneficent actions. He does some good, but it is to procure distinction; he solicits distinction, but it is by doing good.

Upon the whole, "Shakespeare, in his "Timon of Athens, illustrates the conse-"quences of that inconsiderate profusion "which has the appearance of liberality, "and is supposed by the inconsiderate per-"son himself to proceed from a generous "principle; but which, in reality, has its "chief origin in the love of distinction."

ESSAY X.

ON

SHAKESPEARE'S IMITATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS.

ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND.

I CANNOT agree with you, that Shakespeare has exerted more ability in his imitation of male, than of female characters. Before you form a decided opinion on a subject so interesting to his reputation, let me request your attention to the following particulars. If you consider them at all, it will be with candour: and with so much the more attention, that they are in favour of a Poet whom you admire, and I might add, of a sex whom you adore. If Shake-

speare, with those embellishments which we expect in poetry, has allotted to the females on his theatre such stations as are suitable to their condition in society, and delineated them with sufficient discrimination, he has done all that we have any right to require. According to this measure, and this measure alone, we are permitted to judge of him.—I will not, you see, be indebted to the facile apologist you mention, who admits the charge; but pleads in extenuation of the offence, that Shakespeare did not bring forward his female characters into a full and striking light, "because female players were in his time unknown." His defence must rest upon critical principles: and if, "with those embellishments which we expect in poetry, he has allotted to the females on his theatre, such stations as are suitable to their situation in society; and if he has delineated them with sufficient discrimination, he has done all that we have any right to require." I will now endeavour to shew, that he has fulfilled both these conditions.

I. Diversity of character depends a good

deal on diversity of situation: and situations are diversified by variety of employment. We meet, for example, with less variety in the occupations of mankind in countries governed by despots, and unacquainted with trade and manufactures, than among nations that are free and commercial. The slaves of the despot display no greater diversity than depends upon the difference between poverty and riches: for their modes of education never affect the mind; they extend no farther than to superinduce a varnish of external urbanity; and confer some grace or pliancy in the management of the body. It would be a difficult enterprise, in a free country, to raise an illiterate and ignorant peasant from the lowest order to a distinguished rank in the state: but under some despotic governments, persons with no other instruction than what regulates attitude, gesture, and some forms of external propriety, may be exalted even to gorgeous pre-eminence. If situation influence the mind, and if uniformity of conduct be frequently occasioned by uniformity of condition; there must be greater diversity of male than of

female characters. The employments of women, compared with those of men, are few; their condition, and of course their manners, admit of less variety. The poet, therefore, whether epic or dramatic, who would exhibit his heroines in occupations that did not properly belong to them; or who endeavoured to distinguish them by a greater diversity of habits, endowments, or dispositions, than their condition justified, would depart from the truth of nature; and, instead of meriting the praise of due decoration, would incur the blame of extravagant fiction. I say not that the abilities and dispositions in both sexes may not be equal or alike. There are few attainments in knowledge in which the pride of the male sex may not be alarmed, if such alarm be decent, by the progress of fair competitors: and the history of modern Europe will attest, that even politics, a science of which men are particularly jealous, is not beyond the reach of adventurous females. Difference, however, of condition restrains the exertion of female genius; and must limit the display both of talents and dispositions.

Add to this, that the condition of women has been more restrained in some periods than in others. In times of great rudeness, the wives* and daughters of the fierce barbarian are domestic slaves. Even in civilized nations, if polygamy be permitted, and no restraint imposed on the licentiousness of divorce, the fair sex may be loved, if the passions of those who grant themselves such indulgence may be honoured with the appellation of love; but can never rise to esteem†. They may contribute to the amusement or conveniency, but can never be the companions of men. In all situations whatever, where the tendency to extreme profligacy becomes very flagrant, the respect due to female virtues, and confidence in female affection, decline and decay. So great are the obligations of the fair sex to those institutions, which, more than any other, by limiting the freedom of divorce, and by other proper restrictions,

* Millar's Distinction of Ranks.

† Και γαρ γυνη εσι χρηστη και δουλος. Καιτοι γε ισως τουτων, το μεν χειρον, &c. Arist. Poet.

have asserted the dignity of the female character. Polished and even refined as were the manners of Athens and of Rome, the rank allowed to Athenian and Roman women was never so dignified, nor so suitable, in either of these republics, as among the nations of Christendom.—But as the subjects of dramatic poetry, and particularly of tragedy, are most commonly furnished by rude, remote, or antient ages, the poet must submit to such limitation, in his views of human life, as the manners of such periods require. And if Shakespeare, like the great poets of antiquity, has not given his females so much to do, or displayed them as expressing all the violence of passion, or rendered them of so much importance in the conduct of dramatic events, as may have been done by his brethren of later times; he and the poets of antiquity have, in this instance at least, given a more faithful, and not a less interesting representation of that nature which they chose to display.

II. I proceed still farther, and venture to

assert, that there is not only as much variety in Shakespeare's female characters as we have any title to demand; but that they are distinguished with peculiar and appropriated features. Let some of them pass in review before you. If you find in Miranda, Isabella, Beatrice, Portia, and Cordelia, variety and discrimination enough, they may answer for their numerous sisterhood; nor need we, on the present occasion, evoke the spirits of Queen Margaret or Dame Quickly, Juliet or Desdemona.

1. In the character of Miranda, simplicity is intended to be the most striking circumstance. Consistent, however, with simplicity, is gentleness of disposition, flowing out in compassionate tenderness, and unrestrained by suspicion. Miranda, seeing the danger of shipwrecked strangers, never supposes that they may be suffering punishment for heinous guilt, but expresses the most amiable commiseration:

> If by your art, my dearest father, you have
> Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them:
> O I have suffer'd
> With those that I saw suffer.

Conscious of no guile in herself, conscious of native truth, she believes that others are equally guileless, and reposes confidence in their professions. Her easy belief does not proceed from weakness; but from innate candour, and an ingenuous undismayed propensity, which had never been abused or insulted. If her simplicity and inexperience had rendered her shy and timid, the representation might have been reckoned natural: but Shakespeare has exhibited a more delicate picture. Miranda, under the care of a wise and affectionate father, an utter stranger to the rest of mankind, unacquainted with deceit either in others, or in herself, is more inclined to ingenuous confidence than to shy or reserved suspicion.—Moved in like manner by tender and ingenuous affection, she never practises dissimulation, never disguises her intention, either in the view of heightening the love or of trying the veracity of the person whom she prefers. All these particulars are distinctly illustrated in the exquisite love-scene between Ferdinand and Miranda.

Fer. Admir'd Miranda,
Indeed the top of admiration: worth
What's dearest to the world! &c.
Mir. I do not know
One of my sex; no woman's face remember, &c.

Thus simple, apt to wonder, guileless, and because guileless, of easy belief, compassionate and tender, Miranda exhibits not only a consistent, but a singular, and finely distinguished character.

2. Isabella is represented equally blameless, amiable, and affectionate: she is particularly distinguished by intellectual ability. Her understanding and good sense are conspicuous: her arguments are well applied, and her pleading persuasive. Yet her abilities do not offend by appearing too masculine: they are mitigated and finely blended with female softness. If she venture to argue, it is to save the life of a brother. Even then, it is with such reluctance, hesitation, and diffidence, as need to be urged and encouraged.

Luc. To him again, intreat him,
Kneel down before him, &c.

Isab. O it is excellent
To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant.
Luc. That's well said.

The transitions in Isabella's pleadings are natural and affecting. Her introduction is timid and irresolute.

Lucio tells her,

If you should need a pin,
You could not with more tame a tongue desire it.
To him, I say.

Thus prompted, she makes an effort; she speaks from her immediate feelings: she has not acquired boldness enough to enter the lists of argument; and addresses Angelo merely as a suppliant:

Not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,
The marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe,
Become them with one half so good a grace
As mercy does.

Animated by her exertion, she becomes more assured, and ventures to refute objections. As she is a nun, and consequently acquainted with religious knowledge, the

argument she employs is suited to her profession.

> *Is.* Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once,
> And he that might the 'vantage best have took,
> Found out the remedy.

At length, no longer abashed and irresolute, but fully collected, she reasons, so to say, on the merits of the cause,

> Good, good, my lord, bethink you:
> Who is it that hath died for this offence?
> There's many have committed it.

Nor is her argument unbecoming in the mouth even of a nun. Her subsequent conduct vindicates her own character from aspersion. Besides, she had with great delicacy and propriety, at the beginning of her pleading, expressed herself in such a manner, as to obviate any charge.

> There is a vice that I do most abhor,
> And most desire should meet the blow of Justice;
> For which I would not plead but that I must.

Emboldened by truth, and the feeling of good intention, she passes, at the end of her

debate, from the merits of the cause, to a spirited appeal even to the consciousness of her judge.

> Go to your bosom,
> Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know
> That's like my brother's fault.

Isabella is not only sensible and persuasive, but sagacious, and capable of becoming address. In communicating to her brother the unworthy designs of Angelo, she seems aware of his weakness; she is not rash nor incautious, but gives her intimation by degrees, and with studied dexterity.

It is not inconsistent with her gentleness, modesty, and reserve that, endowed as she is with understanding, and strongly impressed with a sense of duty, she should form resolutions respecting her own conduct without reluctance, and adhere to them without wavering. Though tenderly attached to her brother, she spurns, without hesitation, the alternative proposed by Angelo, and never balances in her choice.

Neither is it incongruous, but a fine tint in the character, that she feels indignation, and expresses it strongly. But it is not in-

dignation against an adversary; it is not on account of injury; it is a disinterested emotion: it is against a brother who does not respect himself, who expresses pusillanimous sentiments; and would have her act in an unworthy manner.—Such is the amiable, pious, sensible, resolute, determined, and eloquent Isabella. She pleads powerfully for her brother; and no less powerfully for her poetical father.

3. But if the gentle, unsuspecting, and artless simplicity of Miranda; if the good sense and affecting eloquence of Isabella, should not induce you to acquit the poet, you will yield, perhaps, to the vivacity and wit of Beatrice.—No less amiable and affectionate than Miranda and Isabella, she expresses resentment, because she feels commiseration for the sufferings of her friend.

Is he not approved in the height a villain, that hath slandered, scorned, and dishonoured my kinswoman?

Like Isabella, too, she is distinguished by intellectual ability; but of a different kind. She does not defend herself, or make her at-

tacks with grave, argumentative, and persuasive elocution: but, endowed with the powers of wit, she employs them in raillery, banter, and repartee.

Ben. What, my dear lady Disdain! are you yet living?

Beat. Is it possible Disdain should die, while she hath such meet food to feed upon, as signor Benedict?—The count is neither sad, nor sick, nor merry, nor well; but civil count, civil as an orange, and something of that jealous complexion.

Her smartness, however, proceeds from wit rather than from humour. She does not attempt, or is not so successful in ludicrous description, as in lively sayings.

Beat. My cousin tells him in his ear, that he is in her heart.

Claud. And so she does, cousin.

Beat. Good lord for alliance! thus goes every one to the world, but I, and I am sun-burned; I may sit in a corner, and cry heigh-ho for a husband.

Pe. Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

Beat. I would rather have one of your father's getting.

Another distinction, not unconnected with the preceding, is, that though lively, she is nevertheless serious, and though witty,

grave. Possessed of talents for wit, she seems to employ them for the purposes of defence, or disguise. She conceals the real and thoughtful seriousness of her disposition by a shew of vivacity. Howsoever she may speak of them, she treats her own concerns, and those of her friends, with grave consideration. A compliment, and the enticement of a playful allusion, almost betrays her into an actual confession.

Ped. In faith, lady, you have a merry heart.

Beat. Yea, my lord, I thank it, poor fool, it keeps on the windy side of care.

She is desirous of being reputed very sprightly and disdainful: but it is not of the qualities which we chiefly possess that we are usually most ostentatious. Congreve wished to be thought a fine gentleman; Swift would be a politician; and Milton a divine. What Beatrice, who is really amiable, would have herself thought to be, appears in the following passage, where Hero, pretending not to know she was present, describes her in her own hearing:—

Nature never form'd a woman's heart
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice.
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprizing what they look on, &c.

Tender, affectionate, and ingenuous; yet conscious of more weakness than Miranda, or not like her, educated in a desert island, she is aware of mankind, affects to be mirthful when she is most in earnest, and employs her wit when she is most afraid. Nor is such dissimulation, if it may be so termed, to be accounted peculiarly characteristical of female manners. It may be discovered in men of probity and tenderness, and who are actuated by serious principles; but who are rendered timid, either from some conscious imbecility; or who become suspicious by an early, too early an observation of designing persons. If such men are endowed with so much liveliness of invention, as, in the society to which they belong, to be reckoned witty or humourous, they often employ this talent as an engine of defence. Without it, they would perhaps fly from society like the melancholy Jaques, who wished to have, but did not possess, a very

distinguished, though some portion of such ability. Thus, while they seem to annoy, they only wish to prevent: their mock encounter is a real combat: while they seem for ever in the field, they conceive themselves always besieged: though perfectly serious, they never appear in earnest: and though they affect to set all men at defiance; and though they are not without understanding, yet they tremble for the censure, and are tortured with the sneer of a fool. Let them come to the school of Shakespeare. He will give *them*, as he gives many others, an useful lesson. He will shew them an exemplary and natural reformation or exertion. Beatrice is not to be ridiculed out of an honourable purpose; nor to forfeit, for fear of a witless joke, a connection with a person who is "of a noble strain, of approved "valour, and confirmed honesty."

4. Portia is akin both to Beatrice and Isabella. She resembles them both in gentleness of disposition. Like Beatrice, she is spirited, lively, and witty. Her description of some of her lovers, is an obvious

illustration. "First, there is the Neapoli-
"tan prince," &c. Her vivacity, however, is not so brilliant, and approaches rather to sportive ingenuity than to wit. Her situation renders her less grave, when in a serious mood, than Isabella: but, like her, she has intellectual endowment. She is observant, penetrating, and acute. Her address is dexterous, and her apprehension extensive. Though exposed to circumstances that might excite indignation, she never betrays any violent emotion, or unbecoming expression of anger. But Isabella, on account of her religious seclusion, having had less intercourse with the world, though of a graver, and apparently of a more sedate disposition, expresses her displeasure with reproach; and inveighs with the holy wrath of a cloister. To the acquaintance which both of them have of theology, Portia superadds some knowledge of law; and displays a dexterity of evasion, along with an ingenuity in detecting a latent or unobserved meaning, which do her no discredit as a barrister. We may observe too, that the principal business in the Merchant of Venice is conducted by Portia.

Nor is it foreign to remark, that as in the intimacy of Rosalind and Celia, Shakespeare has represented female friendship as no visionary attainment; so he has, by the mouth of Portia, expressed some striking particulars in the nature of that amiable connection.

> In companions
> That do converse, and waste the time together,
> Whose souls do bear an equal yoke of love,
> There must needs be a like proportion
> Of lineaments, of manners, and of spirit.

5. Our poet, in his Cordelia, has given us a fine example of exquisite sensibility, governed by reason, and guided by a sense of propriety. This amiable character, indeed, is conceived and executed with no less skill and invention than that of her father. Treated with rigour and injustice by Lear, she utters no violent resentment; but expresses becoming anxiety for reputation.

> I yet beseech your majesty,
> That you make known
> It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
> No unchaste action or dishonor'd step,
> That hath depriv'd me of your grace and favor.

She displays the same gentleness, accompanied with much delicacy of reproof, in her reply to a mercenary lover.

> Peace be with Burgundy!
> Since that respects of fortune are his love,
> I shall not be his wife.

Even to her sisters, though she has perfect discernment of their characters, and though her misfortune was owing to their dissimulation, she shows nothing virulent nor unbecoming. She expresses, however, in a suitable manner, and with no improper irony, a sense of their deceit, and apprehensions of their disaffection to Lear.

> Ye jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes
> Cordelia leaves you; I know what you are,
> And like a sister am most loth to call
> Your faults as they are nam'd.

Towards the close of the tragedy, when she receives complete information concerning the violent outrages committed against her father, the sufferings he has undergone, the ruin of his understanding, and has the fullest evidence of the guilt and atrocity of

her sisters, she preserves the same consistency of character: notwithstanding her wrongs, she feels and is affected with the deepest sorrow for the misfortunes of Lear: she has the most entire abhorrence of the temper displayed by Goneril and Regan: yet her sorrows, her resentment, and indignation are guided by that sense of propriety, which does not in the smallest degree impair her tenderness and sensibility; but directs them to that conduct and demeanour, which are snitable, amiable, and interesting. Tenderness, affection, and sensibility, melting into grief, and mingled with sentiments of reluctant disapprobation, were never delineated with more delicacy than in the description of Cordelia, when she receives intelligence of her father's misfortunes.

Kent. Did your letters pierce the queen to any demonstration of grief?

Gent. Ay, Sir; she took them, read them in my presence;
And now and then an ample tear trill'd down
Her delicate cheek: it seem'd she was a queen
Over her passion, who, most rebel like,
Sought to be king o'er her.

Kent. O, then it moved her.

Gent. Not to a rage. Patience and sorrow strove
Which should express her goodliest: you have seen
Sun-shine and rain at once.——Those happy smiles
That played on her ripe lip seem'd not to know
What guests were in her eyes, which parted thence,
As pearls from diamonds dropt.—In brief,
Sorrow would be a rarity most belov'd,
If all could so become it.

Kent. Made she no verbal question?

Gent. Once or twice
She heav'd the name of father
Pantingly forth, as if it prest her heart,
Cry'd, Sisters! Sisters! What? i'the storm? i'the night?
Let pity ne'er believe it! there she shook
The holy water from her heav'nly eyes——
Then away she started to deal with grief alone.

Minds highly enlightened, contemplating the same object, both reason, and are affected in a similar manner. The tone of thought in the following passage, in The Theory of Moral Sentiments, accords perfectly with Shakespeare's account of Cordelia "What noble propriety and grace do we feel in the conduct of those who, in their own case, exert that recollection and self-command which constitute the dignity of every passion, and which bring it down to what others can enter into? We are dis-

gusted with that clamorous grief, which, without any delicacy, calls upon our compassion with sighs and importunate lamentations. But we reverence that reserved, that silent and majestic sorrow, which discovers itself only in the swelling of the eyes, in the quivering of the lips and cheeks, and in the distant but affecting coldness of the whole behaviour. It imposes the like silence upon us. We regard it with respectful attention, and watch with anxious concern over our whole behaviour, lest by any impropriety we should disturb that concerted tranquillity, which it requires so great an effort to support."—Cordelia, full of affection, is grieved for the distress of her father: her sense of propriety imposes restraint on her expressions of sorrow: the conflict is painful: full of sensibility, and of a delicate structure, the conflict is more than she can endure; she must indulge her emotions: her sense of propriety again interposes; she must vent them in secret, and not with loud lamentation: she shakes "The holy "water from her heavenly eyes," and then retires "to deal with grief alone."

There are few instances in any poet, where the influences of contending emotions are so nicely balanced and distinguished: for while in this amiable picture we discern the corrected severity of that behaviour which a sense of propriety dictates, mitigated and brought down by fine sensibility, and the softness of the female character; we also see this softness upheld, and this sensibility rendered still more engaging, by the influence of a sense of propriety.

Need I add to these illustrations, the sisterly and filial affections of Ophelia, leading her to such deference for a father, as to practise deceit at his suggestion on a generous lover, and strive to entangle him in the toils of political cunning? Need I add the pride, the violence, the abilities, and the disappointed ambition of Margaret? Need I add Dame Quickly and Lady Anne?—If, notwithstanding all these, you persist in saying that Shakespeare has produced no eminent female characters, because in the words of the poet whom you quote, 'most women have no character at all;' you must mean in the spirit or manner of the satirist, and

with an eye to the personage last-mentioned, to pun rather than to refute. But you tell me—"the gentle Desdemona is like the gentle Cordelia; the tender Imogen like the tender Juliet; the sensible Isabella like the sensible Portia; the violent Margaret like the violent Constance; and the cruel Regan like the cruel Goneril: in short, that they are all copies of one another; that any differences appearing between them are occasioned by difference of external circumstances; that Portia, in Isabella's situation, would have been another Isabella: and so with the rest."—If this be urged as an objection, it cannot be admitted. Desdemona, in the same situation with Margaret, would not have inveighed, nor vented imprecation. Cordelia was situated in the same circumstances with Regan, but performed a very different part. Notwithstanding the similarity in the instances above-mentioned, there is still so much diversity as to obviate the objection.—Still further, if you reason in this manner, allow me to say, in the words of the poet, you reason "too curiously;" and would reduce the sum of dra-

matic characters, how different soever their names and fortunes, to an inconsiderable number. Does it not strike you too, that to disregard such discrimination as proceeds from external condition, is contrary to the truth of nature, and the justice of impartial criticism? Many persons may have received from nature similar talents and dispositions; but being differently placed in society, they exert the same power, or gratify the same desire, with different degrees of force, and different modes of indulgence. Their characters are therefore different, and if so in reality, so also in imitation. Similarity of original structure does not constitute similarity or sameness of character, unless that similarity appear in the same circumstances, in the same manner, and with equal force. I still therefore adhere to my former opinion; and have not ventured, I hope, in vain to assert the merits of Shakespeare's females.

ESSAY XI.

Shakespeare's Imitation

OF CHARACTERISTICAL, AND PARTICULARLY OF NATIONAL MANNERS,

ILLUSTRATED IN THE CHARACTER OF FLUELLEN.

IT has been the fate of criticism, more perhaps than of any other science, to have suffered by the use of undefined expressions. There is, indeed, a sort of general and loose meaning usually annexed to the terms most frequently employed by critics; and which answers the purposes of that slight amusement which is obtained by cursory reading: yet inattention to the explanation of terms, so highly detrimental in other departments of literature, has contributed a

good deal, to retard the progress of critical knowledge. Even antient writers have not always been very precise or explicit, on subjects of this nature: and Aristotle himself, with all his accuracy and discernment, not sufficiently aware, that definition may be of service even in obvious matters, has left ample room for discussion. Among other undefined expressions employed in criticism, may, perhaps, be included the term Manners. Eminent and enlightened critics may probably have thought the meaning so manifest, as not to have required any particular explanation. Yet if the just imitation of manners heightens the merit of fine-writing, some considerations to direct the writer, or those who would judge of his performance, are indispensably necessary: and if so, a definition, or at least some description of the thing required, how obvious soever it may appear, would not be useless. Previous therefore to the discussion of our present subject, I will endeavour to ascertain the meaning, and offer some illustration of the term.

I. A great number of the diversities, apparent in human nature, are occasioned by differences of external circumstance and situation. These diversities, which are to become the chief object of our present consideration, may, for the sake of perspicuity in our further procedure, be divided into two different classes. The distinction between the powers of intellect and sensibility, or, as they are commonly termed, the powers of the understanding, and of the will, though necessary to be kept in view in the following observations, need not be very formally announced. The distinction chiefly to be attended to, proceeds upon other principles; and arises from the mode of indulging, or the habit of exercising, our powers and passions. One set of the diversities we are considering, may be said to arise from the different *mode* of gratifying the same desire, or employing the same faculty; and another no less numerous, from the greater *force* acquired by one desire or faculty, or one kind of desires and faculties compared with others originally of equal vigour.

1. To differences in external circumstance and situation, the first of these, namely, the diversities arising from the different mode of complying with the same inclination, of removing the same uneasiness, or of exercising the same talent, may very easily be traced, and very obviously exemplified. The delicate structure of the human body renders raiment necessary; but the climate in one country may render one kind of apparel more convenient there than that which is used in another. A person of any distinction in Europe, removing the uneasinesses of hunger and thirst, has his bread cut, his meat sometimes sliced, and his drink presented to him by a servant; but a Chieftain in the islands of Calafoy, or of Anamocoa, has additionally to these services, an attendant, or Tow-tow, to put his victuals into his mouth. Musical powers, and a taste for musical composition, may be met with in all ages and nations: but music in one place is used to celebrate nuptial festivity; and in another at the burial of the dead. In one country the prevailing music is of a cheerful character; in another melan-

choly: the tabor and the pipe, so frequent in the south of England, enliven the voice of joy; but both the vocal and instrumental music of an Hebridean, deepens the tone of sorrow.

2. Not only will differences of situation occasion various *modes* of indulgence, or of exertion, but varieties also, in the *strength* or *weakness*, of our powers and passions. We may observe still further, that opportunity and situation, excite feelings, awaken appetites, induce habits, and even animate faculties which otherwise, would have never appeared. All men possess principles of religion, and are led by their constitution, to the worship of invisible intelligence; but they differ from one another not only in the form, but in the spirit of their devotion. The subjects of despotic or tyrannical governments, homage beings characterised like tyrants, for their worship is dictated by servile fear. But those who live under a more equitable administration, are inclined, even without the assistance of revelation, to consider their invisible rulers as pleased with their felicity, and are addicted to a religion

of love. Uninstructed, however, in the true dignity of the divine nature, and not conceiving their invisible rulers as exalted a great deal above themselves, they take unbecoming liberties in their religious worship. The festive devotion of the Athenians, together with the familiarity of address, and intimacy of intercourse, which they thought not inconsistent with the rank even of their highest deities, tended without any designed impiety on their parts, to throw the host of heaven, and even the gravest of their divinities, into ludicrous situations. In like manner, when the republican spirit in Scotland, rose to licentious excess, the addresses of many republican preachers, even to the Supreme Being, exhibited gross familiarity, and unbecoming confidence. These excesses are very different from the trembling terror of the poor enslaved worshipper of St. Alexander Newsky, who crosses himself when he comes within sight of the lofty edifice consecrated to the worship of the warlike saint; enters his temple with hesitation, or silent awe; and in the servility of his prostration before the magnificent silver shrine,

smites his bare head on the pavement; and utters no other expression, if he venture to express himself, than a prayer consisting of only two deprecatory words. The love of truth, and the desire of knowledge, are natural to all mankind: yet the vehement and particular desires impelling men to explore the secrets of nature, and which beget science, are only to be recognized in periods of improvement. It was justly considered, by our late intrepid, but ill-fated navigators into the pacific Ocean, as a mark of the total rudeness of some southern islanders, that they discovered no sort of curiosity concerning the European strangers that came among them: and with no unbecoming indignation they regarded those as savages, or scarcely human, who did not gaze with respectful wonder at the skill and dexterity of British seamen. Perhaps if the spirit even of Cook had been confined in the frame of a native of Del Fuego, he would never have ventured with his canoe, farther than Patagonia: the soul of Newton in the body of a Cherokee, would have been perhaps, no otherwise conspicuous, than by his superior ac-

curacy in detecting tracks in the desert: and Milton, excepting for his zeal in asserting the privileges of the community, might have been but the best maker of dirges.

Now, all the diversities in human conduct, occasioned by external causes; all the varieties in the *mode* of indulging the same propensity, or of exerting the same ability; and all the *force* that particular desires or faculties may derive from situation; together with all the desires and faculties, that seem to be indebted, for their active existence, to situation, fall under the denomination of *manners*. In general therefore, it is by their manners, fully as much as by any thing else, that men differ from one another; and that we have all the amusing varieties of professional, or of national characters. It is thus that an Indian can have little fellowship with an European: or a demure monk with a sprightly soldier: yet they may have been similar in their original constitution; and the monk, notwithstanding the severity of his appearance, may, in the principles of his nature, have been as little inclined as the soldier, to the rigours of austere retire-

ment. Thus the meaning of the term *manners* seems abundantly manifest. Manners differ from passions, and faculties, and other inherent constitutional powers of intellect and sensibility, because these are not indebted for their existence, though they may be indebted, for considerable degrees of vigour, to external condition. The term denotes something more particular than habit and character, because these may be the result of every active principle, whether influenced, or uninfluenced by outward circumstance. Tenor of conduct and deportment, in like manner, being the display of character, and flowing from every principle of action whatsoever, convey a meaning in the words denoting them, more extensive than that of manners. Customs again, are more particular, and may be included in the word manners, as a general term: for a custom signifies the particular mode of acting, in consequence of situation, so frequently repeated, as that it comes to be regularly expected, and that its failure may occasion surprize, disapprobation, or sometimes blame. Cicero, in a work not profes-

sedly critical, but in one of his orations against Rullus, gives the following excellent description of manners; to which the foregoing observations, which happened to have been written, before the passage was remarked, may serve as an illustration. "Non "ingenerantur hominibus mores, tam a "stirpe generis ac seminis, quam ex iis "rebus, quæ ab ipsa natura loci, et a vita "consuetudine suppeditantur: quibus ali-"mur et vivimus."

II. Having stated and illustrated the meaning of the term Manners in its critical acceptation, I proceed to remark more particularly, that the fit delineation of manners has contributed a great deal in all periods of literary improvement, to the success of many writers eminently distinguished for poetical or inventive ability. The manners resulting from the effects of time, on the human constitution, in the shifting periods of human life; or from the effects of those professional occupations and conditions that diversify the conduct of mankind in various states of society, or under dif-

ferent forms of government; the manners, for example, of youth and of old age, of freemen and of slaves, of soldiers and of sailors, have, when happily represented, rendered the serious delineations of human nature very interesting, and those of the comic writer, whether poet or novelist, very humourous and entertaining.—At present, however, I would chiefly consider the imitation of *National Manners;* and remark, that representations of these, of Jews, for example, of Negroes, and of Frenchmen; of Scotsmen, and of Irishmen; have, with great success, employed the exertions of cotemporary, or of modern ingenuity.

Such imitation is so much the more remarkable, that when well executed, it seems to be attended with no inconsiderable difficulty. Even the direct statement and description of national character by historians, and the writers of voyages and travels, require much caution and accuracy of distinction. The picture is not to be charged with the colours and features which may be common to all mankind, or to a number of communities. Or, if these are to be pre-

sented, it is only as the ground on which the appropriate and distinguishing properties are superinduced. Nor is it possible, nor would it be expedient, to give a description of every individual. Those qualities only which characterize and diversify the subordinate species from the general class and order, are to be exhibited in the fullest light: and those peculiar circumstances and attributes, those forms and tints that distinguish individuals, are to be no less carefully omitted. The writers, for example, who have given the best account of the external appearance exhibited by the Goths and Romans, considered as different nations and races of men, have not thought it necessary to say, that the shape of both was human, nor to describe every particular Alaric or Marcus: but have told us, that the Goths were tall, ruddy, with fair hair, with blue, or grey eyes; and that the Romans, forming as it were a contrast, were not tall, exhibited black hair, and dark complexions; "nigris oculis nigroque capillo." A similar proceedure ought also to take place in describing their minds, or internal struc-

ture. Such descriptions, however, much more than that of the outward appearance, require correct and even minute observation, powers of acute discrimination, and a judgment not only sound, but unbiassed. Attention must be paid even to external situation. The soil and climate of the country occupied by the people to be described, must be duly considered. Their relative situation with regard to other countries, or different districts of the same country, must be taken into the account. It is likewise necessary to contemplate their form of government; and not only so, but the particular administration of that government under which they live. An estimate is then to be made of the tendency which these relative circumstances and situations may display, in restraining or in promoting, or in any how modifying, those general powers and dispositions, which the natives, in common with the rest of mankind, may be observed to possess. It need scarcely be added, that these remarks apply peculiarly, as was hinted above, to the chief part of the description; not merely to corporeal differences; or to

differences alone in language, and the articulation of vocal sounds, though these must necessarily claim attention; but especially to the powers and affections of the human mind, the diversities of intellect and sensibility.—If these things be difficult to the philosopher who would ascertain, or the historian who would describe, it cannot be more easy for the poet who would express, delineate, and represent those peculiar effects and modified appearances of internal principles, which characterize and distinguish from the members of other communities, not an individual, but the aggregate of all the individuals that belong to one race or community, or that inhabit one particular region. Nevertheless, though attentive observation, together with sagacity in comparison, and accuracy of discernment, seem to have been previously necessary, yet when the representation is well executed, it appears so remote from the labour of study, so obvious, and so easy, as to have been the result of an immediate perception. In expressing, for example, any of the passions and affections of the human race, it is not

previously necessary, that the poet, with analytical investigation, should have examined the fabric of the human heart; yet observing the external habit, the display, in other words, of internal principles in their external acts, or outward efflorescence; he arrests and seizes upon these, and shews them in distinct resemblance. So also the poet who would pourtray a picture of *manners*, has no occasion, with metaphysical precision, to trace their origin, or mark their diversities; but inheriting a tendency to fit observation, his natural sensibility receives a lively impression, and his power of imagination, or fancy, form a corresponding and animated imitation. How necessary soever philosophical investigation may be for the critic, who would determine the nature and merit of such representation, the knowledge of his subject which the poet seems to have attained, appears to have been immediately imparted by a rapid and penetrating intuition.—No illustration of this subject seems to me more satisfactory than that afforded us by Shakespeare, indeed on several occasions, but particularly in his view of Welch

manners, in the character of Fluellen. I proceed therefore to state this illustration in a few of its striking circumstances.

III. Difference of language and dialect, or rather, the imperfection, the mistakes and inaccuracies that occur in the diction or phraseology employed by the personified national character, contribute very considerably, in some humourous and comic performances, to the ludicrous, or ridiculous effect. The broken English, and native idioms, intermingled in the conversation of foreigners, attempting, when not fully instructed, to speak in the language of Britain, afford, when happily imitated, a good deal of amusement. Shakespeare accordingly, derives considerable assistance, in his humourous imitations, not only from the French idioms and pronunciation of Dr. Caius, or the broad Scotch and flat intonation of Captain Jamy, but from the Welchified English of Captain Fluellen. This, however, in the dramatic, or even comic representation of national character, is not the sole or chief source of our entertain-

ment. The poet must enter into the speaker's mind; and must identify his character with the original, by expressing such sentiments, and exhibiting such behaviour, as proceed from principles and dispositions, which external circumstances have diversified; and to the display of which, they may have annexed a very striking, or singular modification. This requires, on the present occasion, to be particularly elucidated.

1. As Wales is a much smaller country, and in all properties of civilization, less improved than England, this certainly was not less so, in the reign of King Henry the Fifth. A good deal insulated even at present, by seas, rivers, æstuaries, and mountains, difference of language, and of lineage, when Henry reigned, and difference also in the administration of government, must have occasioned still greater separation, and have lessened all intercourse between the Cambrians and their Saxon and Norman neighbours. As the employments of the Welch, in consequence of all these peculiarities were few, and their amusements not very numerous, their attachment to their country

was consequently very strong and tenacious. Fluellen is therefore, almost vain of being a Welchman; and is particularly delighted to think that King Henry had been born in Monmouth.

> O 'tis a gallant king!
> Aye, he was born in Monmouth, Captain Gower.

2. As the Welch, when independent, were not always, or rather, were very seldom united under one government, they were engaged in frequent hostility, both with their eastern neighbours, and among themselves. Thus very often employed in warfare, they were under the necessity of exercising and cultivating the warlike virtues; and were therefore valiant, resolute, and intrepid. Fluellen, accordingly, behaves with great courage, at the siege of Barfleur: and by those who know his character, is so esteemed. "I have seen you," says Captain Gower to one on whom Fluellen had bestowed some proper chastisement, "I have "seen you gleeking and galling at this gen-"tleman twice or thrice. You thought, be-"cause he could not speak English ae the

"native garb, he could not therefore han-
"dle an English cudgel: you find it other-
"wise; and henceforth, let a Welch correc-
"tion teach you a good English condition."

3. The hostility in which the Welch were often engaged with their more powerful neighbours, was that of defence. But the defenders in such circumstances, conceiving themselves injured, are more violently exasperated against their aggressors, and are therefore thrown into a state of keener irritation. If this irritation be frequent, it becomes habitual, and forms a corresponding temper; so that its subject is not only liable to frequent anger, but becomes characteristically irritable. This is still more the case, in a state of intestine or domestic animosity; for then, as among equals, the injuries and resentments are mutual. The Welch also, inferior to the English, and perhaps conscious of it; yet unwilling to be thought so, or to make the acknowledgment, were fearful of allowing any appearance, or of submitting to any treatment, that might argue their inferiority. Inexperienced also, and unacquainted with the world, as it is

called, they knew not exactly what things were to be resented, and what disregarded; and thus apt to construe unfavourably what might have proceeded from no evil intention, they became somewhat jealous, and inclined to resent, not only real, but imaginary insult. Swift says, that "a cleanly person is one of nasty ideas;" so also some irritable persons are either conscious of being weak, or suspicious of being thought so. Irritability therefore, constituted an ingredient in the Welch national character, as well as in that perhaps of some other Celtic nations; and Captain Fluellen, attached to Wales, and very valiant, is also irascible.

> For I do know Fluellen valiant,
> And touch'd with choler, hot as gun-powder,
> And quickly he'll return an injury.

He wears a leek on St. David's day; and makes Pistol, who is represented as a blustering and pompous coward, and who had laughed at him for his leek, after beating him, swallow it.

> *Pistol.* Base Trojan, thou shalt die.
> *Fluellen.* You say very true, scaled knave, when

God's will is. I will desire you to live in the mean time, and eat your victuals. Come, there is sauce for it. *(Beating him again.)* You called me yesterday Mountain Squire, but I will make you, to-day, a squire of low degree. I pray you, fall to; *(beating him again)*—if you can mock a leek, you can eat a leek.

4. Inexperienced, and not acquainted with the dissimulation, which unfortunately is too often the concomitant of an improved state of society, persons such as we now describe, are not inclined to value themselves for any other merit than they possess, or to require any higher consideration than they deserve. Truly honourable; assuming no haughty, arrogant, or consequential deportment to disguise insignificance, they transfer their own ingenuousness to other persons; they think that all men are like themselves; and where they see pretensions to merit, they believe them genuine; and where a claim is made on their admiration, they readily acquiesce. Thus their honest candour betrays them into a faulty simplicity; and to a credulity so easily imposed upon, as to render them sometimes ridiculous. Pistol, who conceals his demerits under pompous

and loud pretensions, makes a parade of his valour; and Fluellen, giving him full credit for his assumed importance, believes him, till he learns the contrary, to be really valiant.

Fluellen. There is an antient Lieutenant there: I think in my conscience he is as valiant a man as Mark Antony, &c.

Gower. What is he called?

Fluellen. He is called antient Pistol.

Gower. Why this is an arrant counterfeit rascal: I remember him now: a cut-purse.

Fluellen. I'll assure you now, he uttered as prave words at the pridge as you shall see in a summer's day.

5. But though not boastful or vain-glorious, persons like Fluellen may occasionally take credit, and value themselves for such improvement as they have been desirous, and studious of obtaining. Strongly impressed with the difference between the literate and illiterate, as soon as they are sensible of inferiority, and feel their mind opening with the love of learning and knowledge, they endeavour to remedy their defect, and make proficiency in their pursuit. Delighted with what they acquire, pleased with the

novelty of their new possession, and elated with early success, they conceive it greater than can be warranted by their actual progress, and are forward in its display. In perfect honesty, and without any desire of imposing upon others a higher opinion of their merit than they deserve, they assume a degree of consequence suited to their conscious acquirement; and shew a desire of impressing those whom they conceive inferior to themselves, with a sense of their high attainments. Fluellen displays his acquaintance with antient history, and the military discipline of the Romans, so as to become almost pedantic: and ostentatious not only of his knowledge, but of his eloquence, he urges a conversation on a literary subject with a person whom he knows to be illiterate: "Captain Macmorris, I peseech you "now, will you vouchsafe me, look you, "a few disputations with you, as partly "touching, or concerning the disciplines "of the war, the Roman wars, in the way "of argument, look you, and friendly com-"munication," &c.

6. Were Fluellen's display of learning

with the intention of obtaining deference at any rate, merited or unmerited; and more from the ambition of being distinguished than from the desire of being worthy of distinction; prompted by disingenuous vanity, or even spleen, we should find him unwilling to acknowledge the good desert of others, and inclined of course to detraction. Yet this is so far from being the case, that with spontaneous earnestness, he recognizes in another, the excellence which he esteems, and extols him as an eminent proficient in those endowments and that sort of knowledge for which he conceives himself entitled to particular respect.

Gower. The Duke of Glo'ster, to whom the order of the siege is given, is altogether directed by an Irishman; a very valiant Gentleman i'faith.

Fluellen. It is Captain Macmorris, is it not?

Gower. I think it be.

Fluellen. By Chesu he is an ass, as in the 'orld; I will verify as much in his peard: he has no more directions in the true disciplines of the wars, look you, of the Roman disciplines, than is a puppy-dog.

Gower. Here á comes: and the Scots Captain, Captain Jamy with him.

Fluellen. Captain Jamy is a marvellous falorous gen-

duly estimate his Welch nativity; and finding his wishes on this subject completely gratified, his exultation bearing no proportion to its occasion, becomes ridiculous.

Fluellen. Your grand-father of famous memory, an't please your Majesty, and your great uncle Edward the plack Prince of Wales, as I have read in the chronicles, fought a most prave battle here in France.

King. They did, Fluellen.

Fluellen. Your Majesty says very true: if your Majesty is remembered of it, the Welchmen did goot service in a garden where leeks did grow, wearing leeks in their Monmouth caps; which your Majesty knows, to this hour is an honourable padge of the service: and I do believe your Majesty takes no scorn to wear the leek upon St. Davy's day.

King. I wear it for a memorable honour: for I am Welch you know, good countryman.

Fluellen. All the water in the Wye cannot wash your Majesty's Welsh plood out of your pody, I can tell you that. Got pless it, and preserve it, as long as it pleases his grace, and his Majesty too!

In his reconciliation with Williams after a violent quarrel, he exhibits similar incongruity: his resentment is instantly changed into kindness: he misapprehends his own consequence: he miscalculates the value of his

own remuneration; and in the simplicity of his affection, he renders his good-will ridiculous. He sees the king, while he grants forgiveness, bestow a gratuity; and thinks that he also, while he forgives, must be munificent.

Fluellen. By this day and this light, the fellow has mettle enough in his pelly. Hold, there is twelve-pence for you; and I pray you to serve Got, and keep you out of prawls, and prabbles, and quarrels, and dissentions, and I warrant you, it is the better for you.

Williams. I will none of your money.

Fluellen. It is with a goot will: I can tell you it will serve you to mend your shoes: come, wherefore should you be so pashful? your shoes is not so goot: it is a goot silling I warrant you, or I will change it.

In most of the particulars by which Shakespeare has illustrated the national character of the Welch in the person of Fluellen, the representation is ludicrous or ridiculous: and in general, most of those writers, who have distinguished themselves in this department, have aimed at the same effect. But persons appearing ridiculous, or placed in ludicrous circumstances, are usually reckoned of inferior merit, and are

treated with disregard. Here, however, we have to remark in Shakespeare, a nice, and almost a humane distinction. Though Fluellen amuses us so as to excite laughter at the simplicity, and sometimes absurdity of his inexperience, yet he is not to be despised. Valiant and considerate, he is a person of amiable and unequivocal virtue. The true light in which he is to be viewed is suggested by the description given of him by the king: for it is to be remarked, as we find exemplified in Timon of Athens, though not usually observed, that Shakespeare, when he thinks that any doubt may arise concerning his intentions respecting the character he delineates, expresses his purpose clearly and unambiguously, though indirectly, in words delivered by some of the other speakers in the drama. Apemantus gives the character of Timon; and King Henry intimates to us, that though we may be diverted with Fluellen, we are not to mistake or undervalue his merits. He describes him as not only valiant, but as possessed of such good sense and intelligence, as dictate suitable consideration: for so in

the passage, we are to understand the word *care*.

> Tho' it appear a little out of fashion,
> There is much care, and valour in this Welchman.

The distinction now mentioned is so much the more remarkable, that it is seldom observed by inferior writers; for with them, and in general with ignorant persons, every thing that we laughed at is to be accounted despicable or even unworthy. It is only with writers of superior genius, that we have such judicious discrimination as we find illustrated in the Fluellen of Shakespeare; in the Jew, and Colin Macleod, of Cumberland. The representation of national manners in this, and indeed in most instances, is comic. Yet upon some occasions, it is serious, or with a good intermixture of seriousness.

When the view is intended to be serious, and to produce those grave emotions that are connected with compassion and indignation, the diction corresponds; so that we have no such faulty pronunciation, foreign idiom, or misapplication of terms, as would excite

ridicule. This is illustrated in the character of Shylock; and also in Othello, if Othello be intended to represent not only the colour, but the constitution and manners of an African.

As no example of the dramatic or poetical representation of national manners is more happily executed than that of Fluellen, I would ask, whether any such ample illustration occurs in any work, or in any language, prior to that of Shakespeare? Is any thing of the same kind to be met with in the languages of Greece or of Rome? It is bold to assert, as it is difficult to prove, a negative; yet I know not that any such delineation is exemplified by Aristophanes, Lucian, Plautus, Terence, Horace, or any other humourous and witty poet, or writer in antient times. Yet the peculiarities of the Bœotian, Spartan, Ionian, and Egyptian characters, might have afforded exercise, at least to Athenian invention, and as much amusement to an Athenian audience, as the ludicrous imitation of a philosopher.—— Though a Lacedæmonian appears in one of Aristophanes' comedies, I have not been able

to discern any thing so peculiar in his manners, as to convince me, that his national character was intended to be displayed. He is exhibited indeed, as delivering himself with great coarseness both of thought and expression; but this is not represented as more appropriate to him, than to other characters in the performance. Still further, he is presented, towards the end of the play, in a view so different from what we conceive of Spartan manners, or perhaps, with such violation of Spartan manners, as to satisfy us fully, that no representation of national character, otherwise than by a slight difference of dialect, was really intended. For this Lacedæmonian envoy, departing so far, not only from diplomatic reserve, but from Laconic conciseness or curtness of expression, indulges in poetical declamation, though poetry was never accounted a Lacedæmonian accomplishment, and panegyrizes the military exploits, not only of Leonidas, but of the Athenians. In due form he invokes Mnemosynè to instruct his muse in the deeds of those illustrious warriors who resisted the Persians, whom he states, with

even Athenian exaggeration, to have been "no less numerous than the sand." Then, meaning to assure the rulers of Athens, that the intention of Sparta to abide by the conditions of a treaty then concluded between them, was altogether sincere; he admits in his countrymen, the existence of an evil quality of which even their adversaries were not wont to accuse them, and promises that they will, henceforward* "refrain from "vulpine craftiness." It may likewise be remarked, that in this particular passage, which seems not only to be very serious, but very solemn, the difference of dialect is as much preserved as in other parts of the dialogue; yet this would not probably have been the case, if by assuming the Laconian mode of expression, there had been any intention of giving a ludicrous representation of Lacedæmonian manners: for if any national character was to be exhibited by peculiarity of speech or of pronunciation, the representation must of course have been ludicrous. In some other instances also, no less than in the Lysistrata of Aristophanes,

* Παυσαιμεθα.

it is apprehended that Bœotians and others deliver themselves in the dialects that belong to their particular districts. But mere difference of dialect or pronunciation does not amount to the complete delineation of national character: and though a Bœotian might say θιβαι* instead of θηβη; and a native of Megara shorten the first syllable of θυσω, which an Athenian would have lengthened; it only at the utmost shews a tendency in a Greek poet of great original genius, especially in the departments of wit and humour, towards an invention, which probably, without any knowledge of what had been done by him, was carried to its highest limit by an English poet of at least equal pretensions in the same departments.——In one of the comedies also of Plautus, we have a soliloquy, as is apprehended, in the Carthaginian language; yet this is accompanied, in the conduct or sentiments of the speaker, with no feature, so far as it can be known, of national character: nor does it seem to have been intended as humourous,

* Aristoph. Brunk. tom iii. p. 91. Not: in Acharnenses.

since it exhibits no such mixture of any other language as might tend to excite laughter. At any rate, *the difference of language alone*, does not constitute difference of national character: nor does the mere imitation of an irregular or idiomatic dialect constitute the chief or sole merit in the representation of National Manners.

Coming to modern times, we find no imitation of national or provincial manners prior to the age of Shakespeare in any of the modern languages; for the Gascons of the French theatre belong to a later period. If any such attempt was ever made by an English writer before that time, it must have been executed in such a manner as to have claimed but a cursory notice.* Whatsoever, therefore, may be the merit of such representations, and how much soever we may be indebted for the amusement or interest arising from the dramatic exhibition of national characters, we may attribute the invention to the great poet of Human Nature; and acknowledge Shakespeare as the real and com-

* Malone's Shakespeare, Merry Wives of Windsor.

plete INVENTOR of the dramatic, and particularly of the humourous imitation of National Manners.

P. S. It may perhaps be objected to a previous part of this essay, that considering the manners of Fluellen as representative of Welsh manners, it does not appear how such love of literature, and how such imperfect attainment of it, yet such self-esteem on account of it, as appear in him, could have constituted at that time any part of the national manners of the Welch. The statement of this circumstance therefore requires to be explained, or to be rendered somewhat more general.——An inferior nation, in contact with, that is to say, not only adjoining to, but connected with, and almost subject to, a greater nation; seeing the superior improvements of their powerful friend or neighbour, become desirous of excelling in the same pursuits, if they are not too high for them; and though they should not immediately attain the height towards which they aspire, and though their proficiency should not have been so great as they apprehend, they

value themselves for what they may, or fancy they may have gained. If therefore the distinction be in literature, they will attempt to become literary; and their self-complacency in the attainments they may enjoy, may be somewhat ostentatious. But did literature so distinguish the English in the reign of Henry V. as to excite emulation among their neighbours? Perhaps not: but literature, and the love of learning very much distinguished the age of Elizabeth; and might have produced the corresponding effect on the Welch. Shakespeare therefore, by an anacronism not inexcusable, and not unwarranted by a similar conduct in other poets, particularly in comedy, represents, by means of Fluellen, a feature in Welch manners more peculiar to them in the reign of Elizabeth than in that of Henry.

ESSAY XII.

ON THE FAULTS OF SHAKESPEARE.

THE Commentators on Shakespeare have been accused of blind admiration. They are charged with over-rating his merits; and of regarding his faults with excessive indulgence. Only the last part of the charge has a foundation in justice. His merits have never been over-rated. The ardours of poetical fancy, the energies of strong expression, and unrivalled skill in delineating human nature, belong to him in a degree so conspicuous, as to justify the warmest applauses, and even to excuse, in some measure, the indulgence shewn him for his transgressions. Yet his transgressions are great: nor have they passed altogether unnoticed. Foreign critics have

assailed him with virulence, and have loaded his faults with the aggravations of national prejudice. Even in Britain, the praise of Shakespeare is often mingled with lamentations for his offences. His inattention to the laws of unity, to say nothing of his deviations from geographical and historical truth; his rude mixture of tragic and comic scenes; together with the vulgarity, and even indecency of language, admitted too often into his dialogue, have exposed him to frequent censure. To censure him for his faults is proper; it is even necessary; it hinders blind admiration from tainting the public taste; for offences against taste are more dangerous in men of genius, than in other persons; and the undistinguishing praises so profusely bestowed on Shakespeare, have contributed a good deal to retard our improvement in dramatical writing.

Is it then possible, that a man of genius, eminently conspicuous in one of the highest departments of elegant composition, can trespass against taste; and contribute, even in fine writing, to pervert the judgment? Or is it likely that taste and genius should

depend upon different principles? They are, no doubt, of the same family; yet they are not so closely related, as that they may not be found apart. Many men, without possessing a single ray of invention, can discern what is excellent in fine writing, and even feel its effects. But is it probable, that men of ardent fancy, of active invention, endowed with talents for various expression, and every power of poetical execution, should be incapable, even in their own department, of perceiving, or feeling, what is fair or sublime? Shall the spectator be ravished with unspeakable transport; and shall the breast of him who communicates rapture be dark or joyless? Such assertion is certainly bold; and though it seems implied in the charge against Shakespeare, it must be heard with restriction.

As every work that belongs to the imagination, all the performances of the poet, the painter, or statuary, consist of parts, the pleasure we receive from them is the effect of those parts acting in proper union. The general delightful influence of such combinations may be strongly felt, without our

being able to distinguish their component members, whether of larger or of less dimension; or the nature of the relation subsisting between them. Many tears have been shed for the sufferings of Jane Shore and Calista; yet the persons who have shed them may not have known by what art they were moved. We may also observe, that the variety, the arrangement, the proportions, and mutual relations of those parts, which, united in a fine performance, afford us supreme delight, may be seen and distinguished by persons, who, from insensibility natural or acquired, are incapable of feeling their influence, or of perceiving them with exquisite pleasure. The accomplished critic must both feel what is excellent, and discern its nature. Yet, there are critics who discern, and never seem to have felt. But, besides feeling and discernment, a certain portion of knowledge is indispensably requisite; for offences against historical, or obvious philosophical truths, either in those that perform a work, or in those that judge of a performance, cannot fail of exciting disgust. Thus, consummate taste requires

that we be capable of feeling what is excellent; that we be capable, in some measure, of discerning the parts, and correspondence of parts, which, in works of invention, occasion excellence; and that we have competent knowledge in those things which are the subjects of an artist's labour.

Now, every man of poetic invention must receive exquisite pleasure in contemplating the great and the beautiful, both of art and of nature. He possesses taste, so far as it depends upon feeling; and so far as a familiar acquaintance with beauty confers improvement, his taste will improve. But he may want discernment: for though the powers of discernment are bestowed by nature, yet their perfection depends upon culture. He may not perceive proportion or union of parts in those things that give him pleasure; he may be totally ignorant of every fact concerning them, except of their direct or immediate impression; and thus, if taste depend upon intellectual improvement, his taste is imperfect. He may weep for the death of Lausus, as related by Virgil, without observing that the skill of

the poet, in selecting and arranging those images that excite kindred emotions, is the magic power that affects him. He may be moved with an interesting story of a Bohemian Princess, though ignorant that no such Princess existed, or that Bohemia is not, according to Shakespeare's representation, a maritime country.—Thus, with matchless pathetic abilities, with uncommon ardour of fancy, and force of expression, he may delineate the sufferings of kings and of princes; but by mistaking historical facts, and still more, by blending incongruous emotions, he may excite such disgust as shall diminish the pleasure he would otherwise have given us; and occasion our regret, that his knowledge had not been more extensive, or his critical discernment more improved.

But will not his feelings preserve him from error? Will not their immediate and lively interposition irradiate his mind, and give him a clearer view of the justness and truth of things, than he can receive from metaphysical reasoning or dry disquisition? Surely no feelings can communicate the knowledge of facts: and though sensibility

of soul may dispose the mind to a readier discernment of relation and connection, in the objects of our attention, yet it is not by sensibility alone that we are capable of discerning. But allowing it to be so; allowing that there may be some spirits so finely framed, that, with powers of active invention, they can, independent of cool disquisition, and without enquiring after union and relation of parts, feel by immediate impulse, every effect of the most exquisite arrangement; and be able by attending to the degrees of pleasure they receive, to ascertain the precise proportion, the abundance, or defect of excellence, in a work: admitting the possibility of such endowment, he who is thus highly distinguished, is not, by means of this constitution, exempt from error; he is not placed beyond the risk of misjudging, nor rendered incapable of feeling amiss. He cannot be sure of his feelings. They are of a shifting and versatile nature. They depend on the present humour, or state of mind; and who can say of the present humour, that it will last for a moment? Who can assure us, espe-

cially if we aspire at the honour of extreme sensibility and exquisite nerves, that our present mood shall not be totally different from that which shall follow? If so, the colours and attitudes of things will seem totally changed: we shall feel very different emotions, and entertain very opposite sentiments. Could the man of genius depend on his feelings; could he assure himself that no contrary motions would oppose the natural tendencies of a delicate spirit; or, in particular, that the influence of fashion would never efface from his heart the true impressions of beauty; or that the authority of maxims, specious or ill explained, would never pervert the operations of fancy; he might proceed with impetuous career; and, guided by the pleasing irradiations of feeling, he might scorn the toil of that minute attention by which alone he might gain discernment. Were there no adverse currents, strong, but of silent progress; no shifting gales to drive him out of his course, or no clouds to obscure the face of the sky, he might give full scope to his sails, and, observing no other direction than the beams of some bright constella-

tion, he might proceed on a prosperous voyage, and land at length on some blissful island. But he has to encounter opposing currents, to contend with impetuous tempests; his guiding star may be obscured by a cloud, and his burnished vessel may be dashed upon rocks, or shipwrecked on dangerous sands.

The man of true taste must not only be capable of feeling, but of judging. He must ascertain his feelings, he must distinguish those that are just and natural, from those that are spurious. He must have steady principles of judgment; and establish a rule of belief to which his understanding may for ever appeal, and set at defiance the effects of fleeting emotion. We are not always in the same state of mind; we are more susceptible at one time than another: even the same appearance shall at different moments affect us differently; and we shall be capable of relishing at one time, what, in a less happy mood, would have given us no sort of pleasure. Nay, our sensibility may be, occasionally, not only dull, but sickly; and we may be apt to find pleasure in those things, which, in them-

selves, are neither wholesome nor innocent. Add to this, that feelings of respect for celebrated characters may be as powerful in our minds as those of beauty and harmony; or the authority of a favourite critic may seduce us into erroneous opinions. Thus it is manifest, that, trusting to feeling alone, our judgments may be capricious, unsteady, and inconsistent.

It is in morals as in criticism. Our judgments, and our conduct, must be established upon those maxims that may have been suggested by feeling, but which must derive their force and stability from reason and deep reflection. We must have certain rules to direct our deportment, in those moments of languor and dereliction, when the heart feels not the present influence of compassion, tenderness, and such amiable dispositions as produce excellent conduct. Those celestial visitants do not sojourn continually in the human breast. Reason, therefore, and reflection, ought to preserve such tokens and memorials of their pleasing intercourse, as shall make us, in their absence, act in full confidence that they are congenial with our nature, and will again

return. By this due recollection, they will be induced to return; and, perhaps, to dwell in our breasts for ever. But, without such resolutions; without acting as if we felt compassion and humanity, in the hope that we shall really feel them; and without rendering the sense of duty an established principle of action, we shall, in moments of feeble coldness, be not only feeble, but selfish; and not only cold, but inhuman. Our reason will be of no other service, than to assist or justify the perverse inclination; and a habit of callous insensibility may thus be contracted. It is needless to pursue the resemblance. It might easily be shewn, that in the conduct of life, no less than in our judgments concerning fine composition, if we have no determined principles, independent of present emotion, our deportment will be capricious, unsteady, and inconsistent*.

In particular, the man of mere sensibility, who has not established to himself, either in morals or in criticism, any rule of immutable conduct, and who depends on feel-

* See the Essay on Lear.

ing alone for the propriety of his judgments, may be misled by the application of those general rules that direct the conduct of others. His bosom is not always equally susceptible of fine emotion; yet, under the necessity of acting or of judging, and in a moment of dreary dereliction, forsaken for a time by those boasted feelings that are the guides of his life, he will be apt to follow the fashion; or, apprehending that he is conducting himself according to those well-established principles that influence men of worth, he will be apt to fall into error. This will be particularly the case, should any maxim be held forth as a rule of conduct, proceeding upon rational views, and coinciding in general with the prepossessions of sensibility; but which required to be attentively studied, well understood, and admitted with due extension, may nevertheless be expressed in such general terms with so much brevity, and apparently of such easy comprehension, as that it is often adopted without due extension, without being studied or understood. Moreover, the warmest advocate for the powers of feeling will allow,

that they are often attended with distrust, hesitation, and something like conscious weakness. Hence it is that persons of mere sensibility are ready to avail themselves of any thing like a general maxim, which falls in with their own inclinations; and having no general maxim which is really their own, ascertained and established by their own experience and reflection, they will be apt to embrace the dictates of others. Thus even an excellent rule, ill understood, will consequently be ill applied, and instead of guiding men aright, will lead them into the mazes of error.

I am inclined to believe, and shall now endeavour to illustrate, that the greatest blemishes in Shakespeare have proceeded from his want of consummate taste. Having no perfect discernment, proceeding from rational investigation, of the true cause of beauty in poetical composition, he had never established in his mind any system of regular process, or any standard of dramatic excellence. He felt the powerful effects of beauty; he wrote under the influence of feeling; but was apt to be misled by those

general maxims, which are often repeated, but ill understood; which have a foundation in truth, but must be followed with caution.

No maxim has been more frequently repeated, and more strongly enforced upon poets, than that which requires them to "follow nature." The greatest praise they expect is, that their representations are natural; and the greatest censure they dread is, that their conduct is opposite. It is by this maxim that the errors of Shakespeare have been defended; and probably by this maxim he was perverted. "Can we suppose," it may be said, "that the ruin of "kings, and the downfal of kingdoms, have "been accomplished merely by heroes and "princes? May not inferior agents, and "even the meanest of mankind, have contributed to such a catastrophe? Or can we "suppose, that during the progress of great "events, none of the real agents have ever "smiled, or have ever indulged themselves "in trifling discourse? Must they maintain, during the whole performance, the "most uniform gravity of aspect, and solemn

"state of demeanour? Is it not natural, if a "grave must be dug for a dead body, that "the grave-diggers be persons of the lowest "rank; and if so, that their conversation be "suited to their condition? Of consequence, "the language of Tragedy will not always "maintain the same dignity of expression. "Even kings and queens, moved by some "violent passion, will be inclined to speak "like their subjects, and utter terms, that, "to very delicate critics, may seem ill suited "to their rank. Solemn statesmen may "indulge in trivial garrulity; and grave "senators may act or speak like the vulgar. "Now, is not the poet to follow nature? "And if he is to represent persons in the "highest departments of life, must he not "represent them in their real appearance? "Or must they be totally disguised, refined, "and exalted, according to the enthusiasm "of a glowing fancy?"—It is in this manner that the mixture of tragic with comic scenes, and the gross vulgarity of language to which our poet, notwithstanding his amazing powers of expression, too often descends, are defended; and, perhaps, as

was already mentioned, some considerations of this sort have been the cause of his errors. Indeed, the facts in this supposed defence are admitted. Persons of high rank, in the execution of great undertakings, may employ mercenary and vulgar engines; and may adapt their conversation to the meanest of their associates. Mighty men may be coarse and offensive; grave senators may, like some of those represented by Otway, be contemptibly sensual; and even an English Princess, agreeably to the representation of Shakespeare, addressed by a deformed and loathsome lover, may spit in his face, and call him "hedge-hog." A Roman matron, disputing with the tribunes of the people, who were persecuting her son to death, might with propriety enough have called them "cats." A senator of Rome, in the midst of much civil dissention, might have said of himself, that "he was a "humourous patrician, and one that loved "a cup of hot wine without a drop of al-"laying Tiber;" or in a debate with the above-mentioned tribunes, he might tell them, that they "racked Rome to make"

coals "cheap;" or, with perfect consistency of character, and truth of description, while, in a deep tragedy, he is delineating the reserve of a discontented general, he might say of him, that "the tartness of his face "sours ripe grapes; that his hum is like a "battery; and that he sits in his state like "a thing made for Alexander." All these things may have happened, and as they may happen again, they may be termed natural. Yet, I conceive that the solemn, in dramatical composition, should be kept apart from the ludicrous; that Shakespeare, by confounding them, has incurred merited censure; and that he probably fell into error by following the authority of inexplicit, or unexamined decrees.

There is a certain consistency or unity of passion, emotion, and sentiment, to be observed in fine writing; not less important than unity of action, and of much greater consequence than the unities either of time or of place. The mind is not only pained by feelings disagreeable in themselves, but, independent of their particular character and effect, it is pained by being distracted

and harassed. Now, this discomposure is produced, if opposite feelings, though in themselves agreeable, are poured in upon us at once, or in immediate succession. As the tendency of these dissonant emotions is to destroy one another, the mind, during the contest, is in a state of distraction. Nor can either of the contending feelings accomplish their full effect; for the attention is too equally divided between them, or transferred so rapidly from one object to another, that the pleasure they would yield is imperfect. Add to this, that in cases of such disorder, the finer feeling is generally overpowered by the coarser and more tumultuous. A ludicrous character, or incident, introduced into a pathetic scene, will draw the chief attention to itself; and by ill-timed merriment, banish the softer pleasures. This subject will receive more illustration, if we attend to the success of those authors who have understood and availed themselves of the foregoing maxim. From this proceeds the chief merit of Milton's L'Allegro and Il Pensoroso. Intending in his L'Allegro to excite cheerfulness, he deals solely in

cheerful objects: intending in his Il Penso-roso to promote a melancholy mood, he has recourse to those images only that are connected with solitude and gloomy silence. If you would make us weep with compassion, do not strive at the same instant to convulse us with laughter. Or if you mean to exalt your audience with solemn and sublime devotion, you will not address them with fantastic levity, nor amuse them with a merry tune. The propriety of adhering to one principal object, or in other words, of moving the mind by one particular set of feelings, has been attended to in other imitative arts. We find nothing in music or painting, so inconsistent as the dissonant mixture of sentiments and emotions so frequent in English tragedy. The improvers in gardening are attentive to the same observances. They tell us, with great justice, that in a solemn scene, every thing light and airy should be concealed and removed; that where sublimity constitutes the chief expression, every circumstance should be great or terrific; and, in general, that all subordinate incidents should be suited to

the reigning character*. Even Shakespeare himself, in many brilliant passages, where he follows the guidance of genius alone, or of unperverted sensibility, and, indeed, in all those detached passages that are usually mentioned as possessing singular excellence, acts in perfect consistency with these observations. Every circumstance in his description of departed spirits, in "Measure for Measure," without suggesting noisome, disgusting objects, is directly calculated to fill the mind with delightful awe.

Now, if consistency of feeling and sentiment is to be observed in fine writing, it will affect our imitations of nature. It will lead us to bring more fully into view, than in the original, those things that carry forward, or coincide with our purpose; and to conceal those circumstances which may be of an opposite or unsuitable tendency. If we would describe a cheerful landscape, we must avoid mentioning the gloomy forests, or deep morasses, which may actually exist in it. In like manner, if we would dispose our audience to entertain sentiments

* See Observations on Modern Gardening, Sec. 50.

of veneration for some respectable personage, we must throw into the shade those levities which may have place in the character, but which lessen its dignity. In the fictions of the poet it is allowable, not only to veil infirmities, or to soften and conceal harsh or unbending features, but from the storehouses of fancy and observation to make such additions, both to the landscape and to the character, as shall equally promote our pleasure and our esteem.

Does this rule, then, contradict the great maxim of following nature? Or is there any necessity imposed upon us, of adopting the one and rejecting the other? If so, to which shall we yield the preference? We are not, however, reduced to this difficulty. We may both follow nature, not indeed as servile copyists, but as free disciples; and preserve at the same time consistency of feeling and expression.—When a judicious improver covers a bleak heath with enlivening groves, or removes the dreariness of a noisome fen, by changing it into a lovely lake, interspersed with islands, can we accuse him of departing from nature? Indeed

he varies her appearance, but at the same time improves it, and renders it more agreeable to our conceptions of excellence. In like manner, the poet who excludes from tragedy mean persons and vulgar language, because they are dissonant to the general tone of his work, neither violates nature, nor trespasses against the great obligation he is under of affording us pleasure.

Now, though the spirit of this important rule has at all times operated on the practice of eminent writers, and has even, on many occasions, influenced the daring, but delicate fancy of Shakespeare; yet, so far as I recollect, the rule itself has seldom been considered by the authors or judges of dramatic writing in Britain, as of inviolable obligation. Thus, the maxim of following nature, a maxim most important in itself, and almost coeval with fine writing, has been received without proper extension: for it has commonly been conceived, that by the term Nature, as used by the critics, we are to understand the real appearances of things as they exist originally, and unimproved by human art. According to this

account, a tree with luxuriant branches, and that has never been pruned, is natural. Nevertheless, we may collect from the foregoing remarks, that this explanation is by far too limited. The human mind is capable of discerning and conceiving excellence, superior to any thing we have ever beheld. This excellence, however, does not belong to new objects, but to the improved and exalted state of those things with which we are already acquainted. We cannot imagine a new race of animated beings, different in every respect, except that of animation alone, from the living creatures that we already know; but we can conceive the present inhabitants of our planet exalted to a degree of perfection far superior to any of the human race. This conception of excellence, therefore, is natural to the human mind: the manner in which it is formed may easily be traced; and those representations of external things, which differ from the real appearance, but coincide with our notions of improvement, are to be held natural. This may receive still farther illustration. If by nature we are to under-

stand the original, unimproved appearance of things, the wild American savage is more according to nature than the civilized European. Yet, will any one be bold enough to affirm, that a mind highly improved and adorned with science, is in a state that is unnatural? Neither shall we say so of the tree which is pruned and grafted, for the purpose of bearing fruit; and which, left to its original luxuriancy, would shoot away into useless foliage. By the culture of mind, and by the improvement of external objects, that excellence which we conceive, is in part attained, and is held to be according to nature. We cannot, therefore, pronounce of that superior excellence which has not yet been attained, and which hitherto exists only in the high anticipations of the human mind*, that it is unnatural. Now, the rule of following nature having probably been understood by Shakespeare in a sense too limited, has betrayed him into those enormities that have incurred so much censure. Even his display of character has sometimes been injured in its

* Cic. de Orat.

effect, by this undeviating attachment to real appearance: and though, like Polonius, statesmen and courtiers may, on various occasions, be very wise and very foolish; yet, whatsoever indulgence may be shewn to the statesmen and courtiers of real life, those of the drama must be of an uniform and consistent conduct. Indeed, in comedy, there is nothing to hinder them from appearing as ludicrous as in real life, or as the poet pleases.

The other blemishes in Shakespeare are less enormous; and proceed chiefly from his want of critical and historical knowledge; or from carelessness in correcting his works. Had he been well acquainted with the poets and critics of antiquity, he would probably have been more attentive to unity, and studied greater simplicity in the form of his fables. Not that he would have adopted the practice of ancient poets, in its fullest extent; for this would have been too opposite to the public taste, and too inconsistent with his own luxuriant fancy. We may also add, that some departure from the strict rules of unity enacted by ancient cri-

tics, and some deviation from the simplicity of Grecian poets, is no loss to the drama. Shakespeare, however, by having known them, and by having adhered to them in some degree, would have been less irregular and incoherent. In like manner, by having been better acquainted with ancient history, he would not have represented Alexander the Great as existing prior to the age of Coriolanus; nor would he have represented the Roman matrons, in the days of Menenius Agrippa, as employing themselves in sewing cambric; nor would he have mentioned the tribunes of the Roman people as judges in the courts of justice, or even at great pains to lower the price of coals.

Yet, glaring as these faults may appear, poets of no small reputation have been so far seduced, by the example of Shakespeare coinciding with the taste of the times, that they have imitated, or at least not avoided, the very grossest of his enormities. Otway and Southern are remarkable instances. It may, therefore, be of service to the improvement of fine writing, not only to il-

lustrate the great merits of Shakespeare, and to shew in what manner his delineations of human nature assist the philosopher; but also with candour, and the deference due to his superior genius, to point out his defects, and endeavour to trace their causes. In this investigation, the train of thought, independent of digression or illustration, is according to the following arrangement.

As the works of imagination consist of parts, the pleasure they yield is the effect of those parts united in one design. This effect may be felt; the relations of inferior component parts may be discerned; and their nature may be known. Taste is perfect, when sensibility, discernment, and knowledge are united. Yet, they are not indispensably united in the man of poetic invention. He must possess sensibility; but he may want knowledge and discernment. He will thus be liable to error. Guided solely by feeling, his judgment will be unsteady; he will, at periods of languor, become the slave of authority, or be seduced by unexamined maxims. Shakespeare was in this situation. Endowed with genius, he pos-

Perfect taste

sessed all the taste that depended on feeling. But, unimproved by the discernment of the philosophical, or the knowledge of the learned critic, his sensibility was exposed to perversion. He was misled by the general maxim that required him to "follow nature." He observed the rule in a limited sense. He copied the reality of external things; but disregarded that conception of excellence which seems inherent in the human mind. The rule, in its extended acceptation, requires that objects intended to please, and interest the heart, should produce their effect by corresponding, or consonant feelings. Now, this cannot be attained by representing objects as they appear. In every interesting representation, features and tints must be added to the reality; features and tints which it actually possesses, must be concealed. The greatest blemishes in Shakespeare arose from his not attending to this important rule; and not preserving in his tragedies the proper tone of the work. Hence the frequent and unbecoming mixture of meanness and dignity in his expression; of the serious and ludicrous in his

representation. His other faults are of less importance; and are charged to his want of sufficient knowledge, or care in correcting. In a word, though his merits far surpass those of every other dramatic writer, and may even apologize for his faults; yet, since the ardour of admiration may lead ingenious men to overlook, or imitate his imperfections, it may be of some service, "to point "them out, and endeavour to trace their "causes."

" portance to philosophical scrutiny, if the " position of the mind, in any given cir- " cumstances, could be fixed till it was de- " liberately surveyed; if the causes which " alter its feelings and operations could be " accurately shewn, and their effects ascer- " tained with precision." To accomplish these ends, the dramatic writers, and particularly Shakespeare, may be of the greatest use. An attempt has accordingly been made, in the preceding discourses, to employ the light which he affords us in illustrating some curious and interesting views of human nature.

In Macbeth, misled by an overgrown and gradually perverted passion, " we trace the " progress of that corruption, by which " the virtues of the mind are made to contri- " bute to the completion of its depravity*." In Hamlet we have a striking representation of the pain, of the dejection, and contention of spirit, produced in a person, not only of exquisite, but of moral, and correct sensibi-

* These words are extracted from a letter from Mr. Burke to the author, on the subjects of the preceding Essays.—*See appendix.*

telligible. Hence several learned and discerning editors have rendered essential service to the literature of their country, by explaining his obsolete phrases, by freeing his text from spurious passages, and by elucidating his frequent allusions to obscure, or antiquated customs. Labours of this sort are so much the more valuable, as Shakespeare is justly accounted the great poet of human nature. Even to moralists and philosophers, his display and illustration of passions and manners, may afford not only amusement but instruction.

great poet of human nature

Sh. affords INSTRUCTION

"The operations of the mind," as has been well observed by an anonymous writer, in his remarks on some of the preceding essays, "are more complex than those of "the body: its motions are progressive: its "transitions abrupt and instantaneous: its "attitudes uncertain and momentary. The "passions pursue their course with celerity; "their direction may be changed, or their "impetuosity modified by a number of "causes which are far from being obvious, "and which frequently escape our observa-"tion. It would therefore be of great im-

of propriety, leads men to an extravagant expression both of social and unsocial feelings; renders them capriciously inconstant in their affections; variable, and of course irresolute in their conduct. In Timon of Athens, we have an excellent illustration of self-deceit, displayed in the consequences of that inconsiderate profusion which assumes the appearance of liberality; and is supposed, even by the inconsiderate person himself, to proceed from a generous principle; but which, in reality, has its chief origin in the love of distinction.

But while Shakespeare furnishes excellent illustrations of many passions and affections, and of many singular combinations of passion, affection, and ability, in various characters, we perceive, in the justness of his imitation, the felicity of his invention. While he 'holds up a mirror,' in which we recognize the features and complexions of many powers and principles in the human mind, we must admire that fine polish by which they are received, and reflected. He may be irregular in the structure of his fable, incorrect in his geographical or historical

knowledge, and too close an imitator of nature in his mixture of serious and ludicrous incidents; for these are his principal errors: but in the faithful display of character, he has not hitherto been surpassed. Nor can the carelessness imputed to him in some other respects, be charged upon him, without injustice, in his portraits of human life.

The true method of estimating his merit in this particular, is by such an examination as in the preceding discourses has been suggested, and in some measure attempted. General remarks are often vague; and, to persons of discernment, afford small satisfaction. But if we consider the sentiments and actions, attributed by the poet to his various characters, as so many facts; if we observe their agreement or disagreement, their aim, or their origin; and if we class them according to their common qualities, or connect them by their original principles, we shall ascertain, with some accuracy, the truth of the representation. For, without having our judgments founded in this manner, they are liable to change, error, and inconsistency. Thus the moralist becomes

a critic: and the two sciences of ethics and criticism appear to be intimately and very naturally connected. In truth, no one who is unacquainted with the human mind, or entertains improper notions of human conduct, can discern excellence in the higher species of poetical composition.

It may be said however, in a superficial or careless manner, 'that in matters of this kind, laborious disquisition is unnecessary: and that we can perceive or feel at once, whether delineations of character be well or ill executed.'—Persons, indeed, of such catholic and intuitive taste, require no erudition. Conscious of their high illumination, they will scorn research, and reject enquiry. Yet many of those who find amusement in fine writing, cannot boast of such exquisite and peculiar endowments. As they need some instruction before they can determine concerning the merit of those delineations that imitate external objects; so they need no inconsiderable instruction before they will trust to their own impressions concerning the display of the human mind. Now, if criticism be useful in form-

ing, or in rectifying our taste for what is excellent in language, imagery, and arrangement of parts, it is surely no less useful in regulating our judgment concerning the imitation of human powers and propensities? Or is it an easier matter to determine whether an affection of the mind be called forth on a fit occasion, expressed with no unsuitable ardor, and combined with proper adjuncts; than to judge concerning the aptness of a comparison, or the symmetry of a sentence? Yet, in the present state of literary improvement, none, without being conscious of having cultivated their powers of taste, will decide with assurance concerning the beauties either of imagery or of language: and none, whose range of observation has been extensive, will pronounce the knowledge of human nature, of the passions and feelings of the heart, a matter of much easier attainment. If the display of character require the highest exertion of poetical talents, that species of criticism which leads us to judge concerning the poet's conduct in so arduous an enterprize, is not inferior, or unimportant.

Add to this, that the differences of opinion concerning some of Shakespeare's most distinguished characters, which the author of these imperfect essays has had occasion to remark, since they were first offered to an indulgent public, are sufficient to satisfy him, that such disquisitions may not only be amusing, but have a direct tendency to establish, on a solid foundation, the principles of sound criticism. Any thing further on this subject would be superfluous. Those who have a true relish for genuine and agreeable imitations of human nature, and whose judgments are not misled by prejudice, even though they should receive immediate enjoyment from the delineations they contemplate, and be instantaneously inclined to pronounce them just, will receive additional satisfaction, if, by the dispassionate award of reason, their feelings are justified, and their prepossessions confirmed.

APPENDIX.

A LETTER

FROM MR. BURKE TO THE AUTHOR.

SIR,—I should be extremely concerned if you were to judge of the value which I set on the honour you have done me, by the lateness of my acknowledgment. I may be suspected of procrastination and negligence by those who know me, but never I trust of ingratitude. But neither the failing which I acknowledge, nor the vice which I abhor, was among the causes of my delay in answering your most obliging letter, and thanking you for your most acceptable present. My little occupations, which redoubled on me towards the close of the session, and my little private concerns, which I neglect during the time of parliamentary business, have not permitted me, until within these

few days, to go through your two volumes, although their bulk and value are so very different. I have now read both with much pleasure and instruction. The poetry is graceful and affecting, and of a very happy turn. I could indeed wish that you had chosen to write in rhyme, as I doubt whether any poetry, except the dramatical, appears in its best form in blank verse; particularly in the lesser and lighter kinds. But in this however I shall not be very positive, as I know that I differ from the practice of great poets, and the decision of great judges.

You are certainly in the right, that the study of poetry is the study of human nature; and as this is the first object of philosophy, poetry will always rank first among human compositions. In that study you cannot have chosen a fitter object than Shakespeare. Your tracing that progress of corruption, by which the virtues of the mind are made to contribute to the completion of its depravity, is refined and deep; and tho' there are several ingenious moral criticisms on Macbeth, this seems to me quite new. In your examination of Hamlet, you have

very well unravelled the mazes and perplexities of passion and character which appear in that play. You have really removed a great many difficulties which I found in it. Still, however, some remain; which, I suspect, have arisen from the poet's having a little forgotten himself, or perhaps (what I conceive is sometimes the case with Shakespeare) from his not having persevered through the play in the plan on which he had originally set out, and not having corrected the foregone part, to the new ideas he had adopted in the course of his work. Shakespeare having entered the most deeply perhaps of all the poets into human nature, is clearly the best subject for criticism. But it would be worthy of you, if in the course of your enquiries you would turn your attention to his faults, which are many of them, of a kind as peculiar as his excellencies; for I am far from sure that an indiscriminate admiration of this poet has not done something towards hurting our taste in England. But I ought to ask pardon for suggesting any thing on this subject to you, who are so perfect a master of it.

I am much flattered by the good opinion which you are so indulgent as to express of the trifles I have written; and of my intentions in my very feeble endeavours in active life. However, in expressing your approbation, you seem to ascribe to me some writings, the honor of which belongs to somebody else, as I have not done any thing in that way. Indeed very many years are elapsed since I had leisure or inclination for any compositions, except a few which have an immediate relation to the unhappy concerns in which I take a part. Except two or three of such, I have written nothing, though many pieces to which I had no title, have been attributed to me. One of the inconsiderable papers which I have written, I now take the liberty of sending to you. The principles on which it goes will make you the more indulgent to the execution. How could you think I could be indifferent to the opinions of a gentleman in your honourable and happy situation, secluded though you conceive it to be from the importance of political occupation? So far from it, that I look with a degree of admiration not wholly unmixed with

envy, on the course of life you have chosen. As long as the original light is brighter than the reflected, as long as the instructor is wiser than the instructed, so long will your occupation be superior to ours. The contemplative virtue is in the order of things above the active; at least I have always thought it so. It has as great a degree of perfection and independence as any thing given to man can have: the other, at best, is but a very gross and concrete body; constantly dependent; frequently defeated; always obstructed; and carries with it, even when most successful, such manifest debility and imperfection, as gives daily and hourly cause of disgust to any one who has but the faintest ideas of what excellence is. You will remember the beautiful lines that express that condition of life, so superior not only to the vices, but to the inferior and incomplete virtues:

Credibile est illos pariter vitiisque locisque
Altius humanis exeruisse caput.
Non Venus et vinum sublimia pectora fregit;
Officiumve fori, militiæve labor;
Nec levis ambitio, perfusaque gloria fuco,
Magnarumve fames solicitavit opum.

and the rest that precede and follow them. You see, that by the art of quoting I have contrived to give some value to my letter. You will have the goodness to excuse its exorbitant length.

I have the honour to remain,
With the greatest esteem, Sir,
Your's, &c.

(SIGNED) EDMUND BURKE.

Westminster, June 18, 1777.

ANOTHER LETTER

FROM MR. BURKE TO THE AUTHOR.

SIR,—We have lately had a good deal of laborious attendance in Parliament; I should suffer much more from it than I have done, if it had entirely prevented me from profiting by your very valuable present. The public is much obliged to you, and they will duly reward you. All that I can do, is to assure you of my sincere gratitude for the pleasure and instruction I have received. I think you put Russia in a light entirely new: at least it appeared so to me in many particulars. The things you have touched upon may lead a thinking mind a great way. I enter very much into the character you have given of the people of that country; particularly in what you make their characteristic, the levity of their disposition. I can readily believe the truth of your drawing; though it is putting the Russians in a point of view different from that in which they have been observed by any traveller. I think

the other features in the portrait are such as have also escaped observation.

The dissertations on Shakespeare came into my hands before the Russian travels. It appears to me to be a truly classical performance. Your plan of moral criticism I am sure is original, and carries a strong and distinctive mark of genius. You have executed it perfectly well throughout; particularly in the character of King Lear, which is my favourite. I do not know whether I am right or not, but I pitch upon this in preference, as it is a link which connects your two books: for one cannot help tracing a relation between your Lear and your Muscovites.

You will smile at the poor return which I venture to make for your valuable gifts. But my apology is, that what I send to you is itself apologetick. Great pains have been taken not only to traduce principal movers, but persons of no greater significance than myself. Look upon it in the light of an apology to you, and not as any attempt at a return. I know that when farmers send the best products of soil and cultivation to mar-

ket in this great city, rather than return with their waggons empty, they will be content to take in a load of ashes. Take then this as your back carriage. I take the liberty of sending the same to Dr. Leechman and Mr. Millar, that you may not suspect me of the presumption of an exchange of commodities.

I should be happy to wait upon the University next Easter, but I really fear it will not be in my power. I flattered myself with the pleasure of attending my Lord Maitland, but that I fear will not be within the compass of either of us. However you may be assured I am perfectly sensible of the honour you intend me, and will strain every nerve to attain my object.

I have indeed at present little, or rather no leisure. Present therefore my humble respects to Dr. Leechman, and assure him that I shall have the greatest pleasure in giving my next spare moments to the obedience of the very obliging commands Dr. L. has laid upon me. But I am, as all members ought to be just now, on Hindû. Their affairs engross my whole heart, and in truth cost me some sleepless nights. Perhaps I may trouble you

with two or three of the reports; such I mean as are of a portable size, though they are printed with every kind of fault.——I have the honour to be, with the highest regard,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

(SIGNED) EDMUND BURKE.

Jan. 22, 1783.

THE END.

Printed by Harris and Brothers, Liverpool.

3 2044 011 781 333